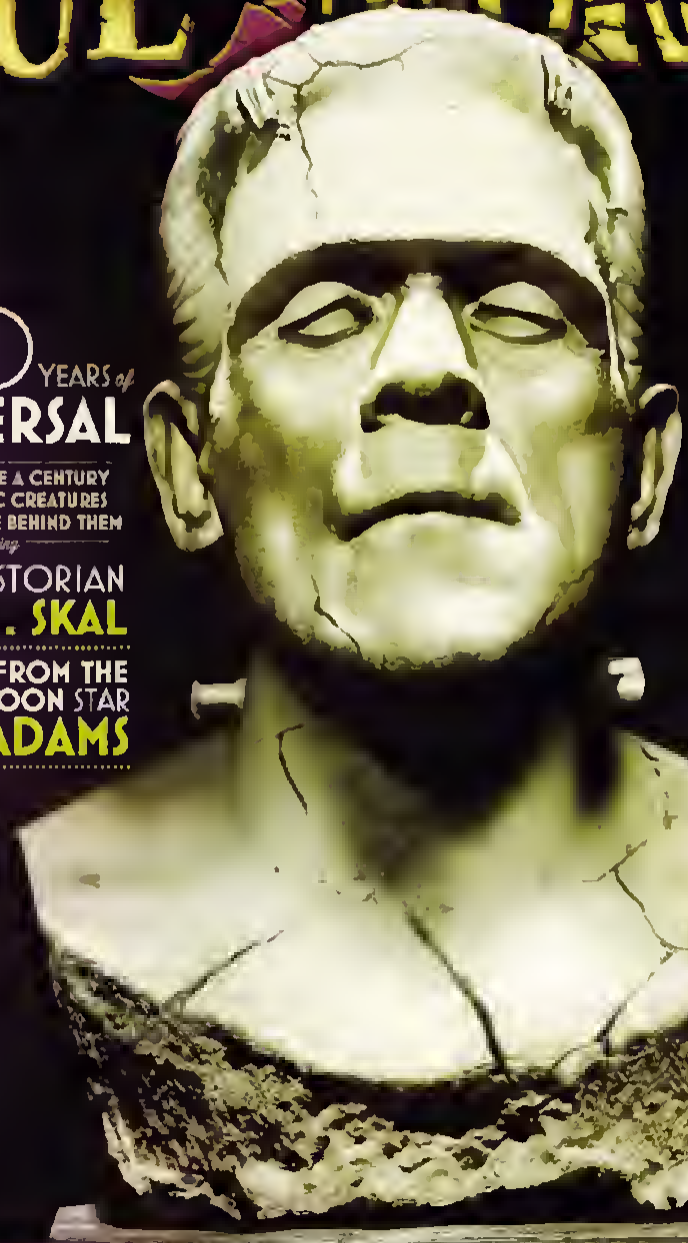
Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MORGUE

15th ANNIVERSARY HALLOWEEN ISSUE



100 YEARS of UNIVERSAL

We celebrate a century of the classic creatures and the people behind them

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CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON STAR JULIE ADAMS

DRACULA'S **CARLA LAEMMLE**

MONSTER KIDS SARA KARLOFF and **BELA LUGOSI, JR.**

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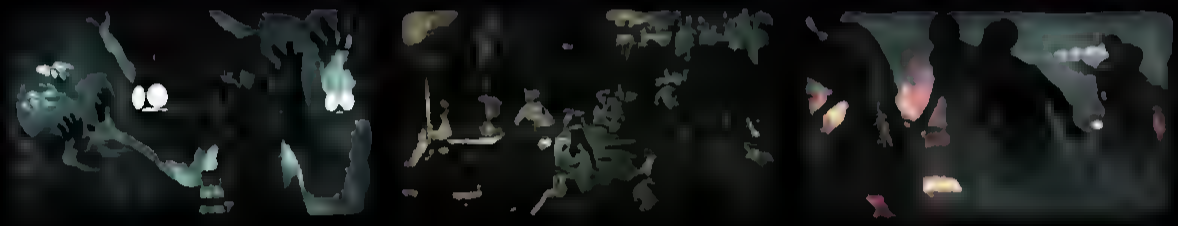
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THE STUDIO THAT MONSTERS BUILT!

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Rondo Hatton.

NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

If you could save only one of your collectibles from a fire, what would it be? I don't have to think twice about it. Frankenstein. Specifically, my plastic Aurora model of the Universal Monster version of Frankenstein's monster (who we'll refer to as simply Frankenstein for brevity's sake), which has a glow-in-the-dark head and hands and a little clapboard on its base with the film's name on it. I doubt it's worth anything on the collectibles market – I moved the arm up and down so much that poor old Frank can no longer hold his little arm up – but it means the world to me.

One of my most vivid childhood memories is helping my dad assemble it. I handed him the little plastic parts, he took care of the model glue and my mom avoided having to take me to the emergency room because I'd stuck my fingers together.

I don't think I'd even seen Universal's *Frankenstein* at that time, but I was obsessed with that famous Boris Karloff look nevertheless. My parents encouraged my first monster crush and bought me a cardboard Frankenstein head, which I would lovingly hang up every Halloween; I'd scored a rubber Frankenstein toy that I played with 'til the paint rubbed off; and my favourite T-shirt had an iron-on image of Frank administering a choke hold, and read, "If I want your opinion, I'll beat it out of you." I wore it until the decal was hanging off, the armpits had holes and I'd outgrown it by at least one size.

It's no surprise that so many of us latch onto that hulking brute. As frightening as he is, he's essentialy a big kid – one who has to learn how to walk, talk and find his place in a world that's frightening. (This depiction was not in Mary Shelley's original novel, which portrays the character as literate and intellectual.) He's not in control of either his body or his emotions, but he is large, powerful and fearsome, and I found that very empowering as a kid. I'd even emulate him, lumbering around the house, arms outstretched, grunting and pretending to smash stuff – such was my love for the Big Guy.

Karloff himself understood this, according to his daughter, who said the following in an interview for Universal's *Frankenstein* Legacy DVD set: "Children seem to empathize with The Creature, and probably understood the message my father was trying to deliver with his portrayal, and that was that the monster – or The Creature, as he liked to call him – was the victim more than the perpetrator. And children seem to understand that instinctively, he said."

I continued to feel this kinship with the Creature after childhood, too. I may have put away the toys and that cardboard head but I still very much saw myself in Frankenstein. I was growing so fast at the time that I had trouble walking, because the bones in my feet were not fully formed and were actually chipping away. So the doctor prescribed me these less-than-cool arch supports. I was rapidly outgrowing my clothes and my gangly arms stuck out of anything with sleeves, much like Frank's did. At that age, your brow gets more pronounced, your hair gets kinda greasy and you get bad skin – physically, the Creature is an exaggerated teenager. This was also shortly after my dad died, and for a while I felt so much rage towards the world that I put my fist into a wall or two. I even went through a phase where I wore these big, black, heavy steel-toed work boots. In hindsight, I was perhaps secretly emulating the Monster.

Today, as a fully functioning adult with regular shoes, I continue to identify with Frankenstein. Not on a physical level necessarily, but as a person made up of so many disparate parts. Like many of you reading this, I imagine, I still feel like a big kid, for sure, but it's more than that. Personality-wise, I feel like a piecemeal man, a collection of opposites. I'm someone who loves the outdoors as much as the city, punk rock as much as country, travelling as much as staying home, organic veggies as much as a big slab of steak, classic monster movies as much as zombie gore, and so on. There are so many different parts sewn together it seems.

I'm sure the Monster will follow me into the twilight, too. With his stiff movements, creased face and tired look, he also symbolizes old age. Frankenstein is the perfect monster because there's so much of ourselves that we can project into him and take back out. He's the poster boy for not only the Universal creatures, but the horror genre itself, as the compelling balance of empathy and repulsion, man and child, science and nature, weakness and power, life and death, fear and love – those things that collide, combine or uncomfortably co-exist to create the central drama and tension.

This mutability allows for endless interpretations and causes eternal fascination. (Read *The Monster Show*, by our cover story expert, David J. Skal, for a wealth of additional interpretations.) That plastic Frankenstein ain't just an old model, it's my avatar. The monster in me.

Finally, speaking of monsters, we're losing one of our best, as Associate Editor Trevor Tuminski is leaving his seat at the House of Horror to work in the film biz. His contributions over the last few years have been astounding, and we'll miss seeing him and his giant hair at the office. Luckily, he'll continue to make fantastic contributions to *Rue Morgue* as a writer. So long, Trev, and thanks for being such a Class-A creature.

Dave Alexander

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COVER UNIVERSAL MONSTERS
Design by Justin Erickson

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



I MUST VOICE my displeasure that there is no mention even on the website about the passing of Mr. Michael Clarke Duncan. While not a true horror actor, his role in *The Green Mile* was legendary, as were his acting abilities and his ongoing role on TV's *The Finder*. Just voicing my disappointment.

KEN BOSSOM
– US NAVY (RET), UNITED STATES SUBMARINE FORCE

AMAZING *CANDYMAN* screening courtesy of @RueMorgue [during the 2012 Festival of Fear] and an equally great Q&A with Tony Todd and @RichardCrouse. The bathroom lights stay on.

@SCAREALEX, VIA TWITTER

I HAD A GREAT TIME, though I fear the Festival of Fear is getting smaller and smaller and it's my favourite part of the Expo! I really enjoyed the Gore, Girls and Godforsaken Cinema panel this year :-)

KELLY GREDNER, VIA FACEBOOK

@RUEMORGUE Please get off the Hobbystar ticket and start running solo. You have the power and #fanexpo was terrible.

@ADAMMSBARRY, VIA TWITTER

IT'S RARE THAT an article brings a tear to my eye, but the last interview with one of my favourite authors, the late, great Ray Bradbury [*RM#125*], did. I first encountered Ray when I read – and constantly re-read – *The Martian Chronicles*. Ray is one of the influences that got me to write. This was another of those great articles that keeps me reading *Rue Morgue*. Thank you!

ROBERT MORGANBESSER
– STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

SO HONOURED to have conducted the final interview with Ray Bradbury. Thank you, *Rue Morgue*, for the gorgeous job you did presenting that interview in *RM#125*. R.I.P. Ray.

TIM SULLIVAN, VIA FACEBOOK

DAVE, I JUST wanted to say that your column [in *RM#125*] was very heart-tugging. I too have lost close family members to cancer. Three to be exact. Most recently, my father-in-law. He was a man who loved the finer things in life. The biggest was films. He exposed me to the horror classics and to titles I had never heard of. The one thing he taught me is to be open-minded to all things. I guess what I am trying to say is this: live life and embrace the things that make you happy, for this time on Earth is too short to be wasted on trivial matters.

KEVIN ZACHARY SERRICK, VIA FACEBOOK

GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS, my fellow lovers of the macabre. Have just finished reading your heartwarming final interview with the late, great Ray Bradbury [in *RM#125*] and I must say I enjoyed it immensely. This guy was a fabulous writer, a true original, and a nice man. We will never see his kind again, sadly. R.I.P. Ray. And keep up the great work. Really dig *Rue Morgue*.

JOSEPH MONGIOI – ADDRESS WITHHELD

THANKS FOR dedicating space to the creepy and wonderful books of author Chelsea Cain. Grateful applause to *Rue Morgue* and Melissa Cocetta, without whom my Monday would have been an atomic pile.

NAP BISHOP, VIA FACEBOOK

I LOVE *RUE MORGUE*, it's the best horror entertainment magazine available. Honestly, it's the best source for news and reviews of horror anywhere, including the web. So I was a little sad to see the section of book reviews was smaller than usual [in *RM#125*]. I read a lot and your reviews tend to always be spot on. I hope the full spread comes back next issue.

MEGAN W. – ADDRESS WITHHELD

[Megan, you'll be happy to see a nice full book section this issue. – Ed.]

I HAVE LOVED all things *Rue Morgue* since discovering the magazine in late 2000 in a now-defunct newspaper bodega in New York City. Recently, I've especially loved listening to the Rue Morgue Podcast, Feedback (and occasionally Last Chance Lance) consistently put together an awesome show. Tuning in to the podcast is helping me get beyond the loss of Rue Morgue Radio. Hopefully, there are many more episodes of the podcast (and issues of the magazine) to come.

AMY – AURORA, COLORADO

I HOPE TO SEE a piece on Edward Gorey and his Gashlycrumb Tinies. I remember, as a kid, just staring at those macabre illustrations of children a moment before death, trying to make sense of it. I couldn't reconcile the weird mix of innocence, expectancy, humour and sadness in each cartoon. They were a part of what pulled me into the art of horror and still fascinate me well into adulthood.

KEN – GREENVILLE, MAINE

I WANTED TO SHARE with you something that happened last week to my husband and I. We were driving home late at night when a cop flared his sirens and got us to pull over. We're thinking, "Okay, we're not speeding, everything is up to date, wonder what's wrong?" We roll down the window and the cop says, "So, I've seen the Jesus fish. I've seen the Darwin fish – what's yours?" We burst out laughing and explained to him that it's a Cthulhu fish from H.P. Lovecraft's mythos. He hadn't heard of it, so we said, "Well, it's a big geek thing." He says, "I'm a total geek! Why don't I know about this?!" We thought it was quite funny. Thanks for being awesome, *Rue Morgue*.

JESSICA AND NOEL YOUNG – ADDRESS WITHHELD

WOULD YOU RATHER WEDNESDAYS?

WEEKLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



WOULD YOU RATHER be locked inside an IKEA store for the night with the Tall Man stalking you and yelling "bjømm!" or be forced to put together a one-bedroom apartment's worth of IKEA furniture with a bunch of his evil alien dwarfs and one Allen key?

I'd take on the Tall Man and run around the store. His flying spheres would be no match against a bag of frozen Swedish meatballs.

PAT LIGHTHELP

The latter sounds like the best moving-in party ever. Who's bringing the cheese platter?

REGUS OLEKSI

Tall Man for sure. There's no torture like putting together IKEA furniture.

PATRICK BACON GOGUEN

I'll take the dwarves. I have kids and the dwarves have nothing on them. Hell, they are probably quieter.

MARK VOMERO

Angus Scrimm scared me so bad I couldn't approach him at a con to ask for his autograph. Two years later at another con, I finally worked up my nerve... even so, I'd choose the Tall Man.

TRACEY SHEPPEARD FLEMING

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Dreadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

ELI ROTH'S GORETORIUM OPENS IN LAS VEGAS

Considering the delight Eli Roth has taken in crafting over-the-top, thrill ride splatter films, it's little surprise that he's decided to launch his own haunted attraction. On September 27, Eli Roth's Goretorium was scheduled to open its dark doors on the famous Las Vegas Strip, promising year-round frights and atrocities from the director of *Cabin Fever* and the first two *Hostel* flicks.

With a budget close to $10 million, the 15,000-square-foot building across the street from the Cosmopolitan luxury resort and casino features 24 rooms of props, masks and film-level frights created in-house especially for the attraction by a team of writers, designers, costumers and makeup artists led by Roth and Goretorium CEO Robert Frey. Once the technology, such as the facility's 395 speakers (each broadcasting its own unique sounds), was factored in, along with the 45 actors and The Strip's notorious real estate costs, it became clear that the attraction needed to stay open year-round.

"You can't recoup your money if you're only doing it for three or four weeks, so we wanted to build something long-term," says Frey, who came to Sin City prominence in the early 2000s as a top executive at Pure, the $14 million nightclub in the Caesars Palace hotel and casino. "I've always had the idea to do it, and Eli has been asked to get involved [in horror attractions] for Halloween. But his idea was always to do something year-round, something that could be different right out of the box."

Different, in this case, includes weaving an admittedly cliché back story around the multi-level Goretorium to give some sense of mythology to the madness within its walls. Visitors will start off in the lobby of The Delmont Hotel, whose guests were filleted alive and otherwise set upon by the cannibalistic family who ran the place some 50 years ago. From there, they'll negotiate a series of mazes stocked with a combination of live actors and animatronic scares that depict what became of those guests. It's much like a typical neighbourhood haunted house that opens around Halloween – only with a budget more than five times that of *Cabin Fever*.



Goretorium: *The year-round haunted attraction will feature live actors and a variety of high-tech special effects*

Conceived by the entrepreneur and Roth shortly after a mutual friend introduced them, the Goretorium came together within a year, Frey says.

"One thing you learn from spending time with Eli is he watches a lot of movies, he reads a lot of books – he's really studied the genre his whole life. His mind works differently than anybody else's, so it's been fun just hanging out and seeing how he puts everything together."

To keep the lights on in a building that is presumably shrouded in darkness, the Goretorium charges $35 a ticket online (goretorium.com) and $40 at the door. Those willing to part with $60 can pick up a "Death Row VIP Fast Pass," which gets you to the front of the line for immediate access to the attraction and complimentary admission to the '60s-themed "Baby Dolls' lounge, complete with "zombie feedings." A bar called Bloody Mary's is also there to capture the last bit of cash you have.

And because no story about Vegas is complete without some mention of the tacky weddings performed there, rest assured that Frey has taken care of that, as well. "We have a wedding chapel, so inside the haunt you can actually get married," he mentions gleefully.

So then, who would Frey most like to see put through this Hell on Earth?

"[It would] probably have to be my wife," he says, with a laugh. "She won't go through it, though. It's funny, I have a lot of friends who can't wait to see it but they say they won't walk through it. Even when you walk through it with the lights on, it's scary."

A.S. BERMAN



URBAN ZOMBIE GAME INSPIRED BY DANNY BOYLE'S *28 DAYS LATER*

If you watched *28 Days Later* thinking how cool it would be to fight against a group of Rage-infected psychos for real, you're not alone! The concept has been brought to life as an interactive zombie game, and this Halloween the end-of-the-world pandemic will take to the streets of London, just as it did in Danny Boyle's modern-day classic.

Created by Simon Johnson and Simon Evans of outdoor games company SlingShot, 2 8 Hours Later first took place in Bristol, UK, back in 2010 at the Interesting Games Festival (Igfest). It became so popular that it's now touring the UK and regularly selling out (at £24/$37 per ticket) in cities such as Liverpool, Leeds, Nottingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

Though there are many other zombie-themed walks and chases taking place around the world, 2 8 Hours Later stands apart due to a surprising element of realism. Major streets are closed down, and shopping centres and multi-storey car parks are used as backdrops to horrific scenes brought to life by actors trained to portray the infected. On game night, some 2000 players pour into the staging area.

"At the beginning, you're checked in and given a map and an armband to identify you as a player," explains Evans. "Each group will be told they have to get to a certain location, and then they're released into the gae. They'll head off into the dusk not knowing where the zombies are lurking, so that's when the adrenaline kicks in. There will be around half a dozen or so locations and at each one a scene from the zombie attack will be acted out, survivors warning about the zombie invasion for example, or someone who's been bitten and is about to turn."

It isn't all about life and death, though. The object of the game is to find the survivors' camp, where a big zombie party will take place at the end of the event. People at the door in decontamination suits check hands for a UV cross that shows whether you've been bitten by a zombie or not. The 'infected' get a gory undead make-over and the survivors get a victory photo.

"It is an intense experience," says Evans. "The rush you get from playing the game helps to create real bonds among the players. I don't think many turn up not knowing what to expect, the only thing they might not realize is that it's quite hard work. For some people, this is the hardest, furthest and fastest they've had to run since leaving school!"

The success of 2 8 Hours Later is down to one thing, says Evans. "The cult of the zombie – we knew they were popular, but there are some real diehard fans out there who can't get enough of all things zombie."

While the game has visited London previously, this year's Halloween extravaganza promises to be the biggest yet and will include a new route and a completely new script. With all 2000 tickets sold out in only three days, there really will be panic on the streets of London this October.

For North American fans, plans are currently in the works to bring 2 8 Hours Later to this side of the pond as well, though no further details about dates and cities were available as of press time.

For updates on where the game is heading next, check out 2 8hourslater.com.

CHARLOTTE STEAR



2.8 Hours Later: *Actors made up to look like Rage virus victims chase participants through the streets of London*





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"... and really, if Midnight Syndicate weren't around at this time of year, I think we would actually have to cancel Halloween."
- Rue Morgue Magazine

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HALLOWEEN SOUNDTRACKS

RACIALLY CHARGED STORY IGNITES CONTROVERSY AT *WEIRD TALES*



If you're dabbling in speculative fiction, be careful what you speculate. When editor Marvin Kaye and publisher John Harlacher took over the venerable *Weird Tales* magazine late last year under the company name Nth Dimension Media (*RM#118*), they planned to shake things up. In August, they succeeded.

Controversy erupted after the magazine announced plans to publish an excerpt from Victoria Foyt's young adult novel *Save the Pearls Part One: Revealing Eden*. The controversial book, which debuted in January, imagines a world in which global warming has transformed black people into the dominant race.

"I decided to pull it based on the excerpt we were going to run and the marketing material," explains Harlacher, who reveals they've actually gained subscriptions over the fracas. "The excerpt threw up a bunch of wacky and offensive images and just stopped. I see why people were offended by it. ... I believe that there will be a vocal faction who will always be upset when these issues are brought up, but I didn't pull the excerpt to appease them. I didn't think it was well done, and I don't want to be associated with it. I would love to publish a bizarre, weird piece of fiction that dealt intelligently with race. This is not that."

Typical of the online furor that followed was African-American author NK Jemisin's blog post about both decisions. Jemisin, whose short story "The Trojan Girl" was published in *WT#357* – prior to Nth Dimension's takeover – wrote "... at this point, I'm ashamed to have my name associated with the magazine at all."

The controversy underscored a longer-standing resentment over Kaye's takeover of the magazine's editorship from the revered Ann VanderMeer, who was made senior contributing editor. She severed ties with *Weird Tales* over the planned excerpt.

It also underscores the question: can speculative fiction ever successfully address social flashpoints such as race?

"Sci-fi and fantasy are exactly the genres in which we should be exploring controversial subjects," says Evan J. Peterson, whose short story "Five Films Reviewed by Frankenstein's Creature" appears in the most recent issue. "The veil or filter of the fantastic allows readers to confront their own prejudices or lack of understanding while staying in a comfort zone of magic, etc. The exploration of racism and classism in weird fiction goes all the way back to Shelley's *Frankenstein*, probably earlier...."

A.S. BERMAN

ENTRAILS

❯ Norwegian black metal band Gorgoroth growled "farvel" to long-time on-again/off-again vocalist Pest in August, after the frontman informed the band that he would not be promoting" its Latin American tour just two weeks before they were to depart, according to the group's website. Hoest of Norway's Taake will take over the mic for the tour, with "Serbian Satanist" Attengner of labelmate Triumfall singing on Gorgoroth's next studio album, *Instinctus Bestialis*.

❯ The US presidential race took an entertaining turn in July with the online premiere of the eleven-minute film *Ivy League Exorcist: The Bobby Jindal Story*. The short recreates a 1990 exorcism of a cancer-stricken woman in which Jindal, Louisiana governor and one-time potential running mate for Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney, participated. Shot in faux-documentary style, the clip contains demonic muttering such as "I quff on your Bible" and "Eat my tart, you loser."

❯ When eight members of Kansas' infamous, homophobic Westboro Baptist Church (known for protesting military funerals) showed up to picket Joint Base Lewis-McChord in DuPont, Washington, this past summer, they probably didn't expect 300 counter-demonstrators in zombie makeup, holding signs with suggestions such as "Drink the Kool-Aid already." Organizer Melissa Neace described the gathering as "the easiest way to divert attention from something so hateful."

❯ Shogo Fukushima, a doctoral student at Tokyo's University of Electro-Communications, unveiled a device called the "chilly chair" in August, which features black tubes just large enough to cover the occupant's forearms, when a button is pressed, the chair delivers a ten-kilovolt charge, making the hair on the occupant's arms stand upright. The demonstration was part of a study to see if raising a person's arm hair can actually trigger fear in the subject.

❯ While Stephen King continues to entice us with brief hints about *Doctor Sleep*, the forthcoming follow-up novel to his 1977 classic *The Shining*, Warner Bros. is exploring the possibility of a prequel to Stanley Kubrick's 1980 cinematic adaptation of the original. According to a recent report in the *Los Angeles Times*, the studio has approached writer Laeta Kalogridis (*Shutter Island*, *Nightwatch*) to work on a script, but an unnamed source cautioned that the film is not technically "in production" just yet. *Doctor Sleep* is tentatively set for publication in 2013.

❯ American comic book artist Joe Kubert died August 12, he was 85. Though best known for war comics such as *Sgt. Rock* and founding The Kubert School in Dover, New Jersey, the artist's work in horror comics stretched from the 1940s to the present. Of particular note are his contributions to DC's '70s horror titles, including *Secrets of Haunted House*, *Weird War Tales* and *Ghosts*. Kubert also illustrated an original cover for DC's 2012 collection of the *I Vampire* stories from the Bronze Age *House of Mystery*.

A.S. BERMAN

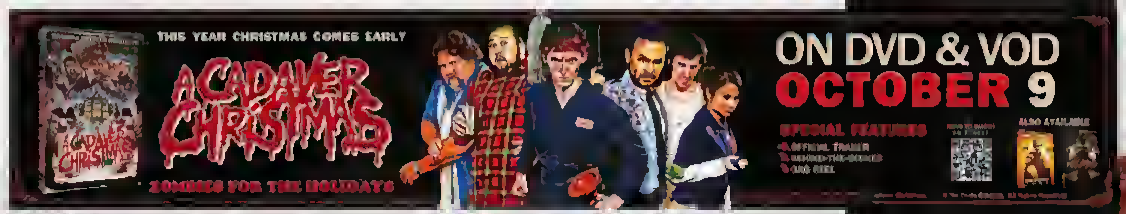


MONSTRO BIZARRO

Oscar-winning FX wizard Chris Walas (*RM#116*) recently announced plans to make a film he co-wrote with director Ethan Wiley (*House II: The Second Story*) titled *The Yeren*, based on the legends of a Chinese "wildman." The Yeren is described as a large, hairy bipedal creature similar to Bigfoot, believed to inhabit the remote mountains of central China. The film will be the first of its kind shot on location in China's Hubei province, where sightings of the creature have long been reported. Joining the team is monster suit actor Douglas Tait, whose credits include stunt doubling for Jason in *Freddy vs. Jason* and playing Bigfoot in an episode of TV's *Grimm*. If successfully completed, *The Yeren* will be historically significant, given that the Chinese government traditionally bans plot elements that question established scientific fact, and rarely allows outside film crews access to the region.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO. 127

The forerunner to Universal, the Independent Moving Pictures Company (IMP), produced a version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1913 with then-famous silent film star King Baggot in the titular roles

The 1943 remake of *The Phantom of the Opera* was filmed on some of the same sets as its 1925 predecessor

An early design for the *Creature From the Black Lagoon* suit was based on the Oscar statuette

Dracula's Spanish-language version, *Drácula*, is often cited as being more provocative. Scenes of the lead, Eva (Lupita Tovar), in a cleavage-revealing nightgown are shown, as are shots of vampire bites on victim's necks – neither are featured in the English version

Clint Eastwood made his feature debut in 1955's *Revenge of the Creature*, in an uncredited cameo

The screenplay for *Frankenstein* (1931) was based upon a stage play written by Peggy Webling and adapted by John L. Balderston, rather than Mary Shelley's 1818 novel

Mary Shelley doesn't describe how Victor Frankenstein's creation is brought to life in her book, it was Universal's 1931 film adaptation that established the concept of lightning and electricity as a means of instilling life into the Monster

To make himself look more cadaverous, *Frankenstein* star Boris Karloff removed a dental bridge to give his face a sunken appearance

In addition to working on *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, playwright/former journalist John L. Balderston wrote the script for 1932's *The Mummy* it was an appropriate assignment, as he had earlier covered the 1922 opening of Tutankhamun's tomb for the newspaper *New York World*

For *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), the cone-shaped hairstyle of the Monster's mate (Elsa Lanchester) was based upon the headdress of Egyptian queen Nefertiti

In addition to playing Larry Talbot/the Wolf Man, Lon Chaney Jr also portrayed the Frankenstein monster (*The Ghost of Frankenstein*, 1942), Count Dracula (*Son of Dracula* 1943) and the Mummy in three films, making him the only actor to appear as all four of Universal's major monster characters

Many of Universal's performers complained that makeup head Jack Pierce employed unnecessarily arduous techniques. Lon Chaney Jr even claimed that he was burned when Pierce would singe the hair on the Wolf Man makeup with a hot iron.

In order to get *Frankenstein* actress Marilyn Harris to do a second take of being thrown in the lake by the Monster, director James Whale offered the girl anything she wanted, which turned out to be a dozen boiled eggs (she was sick of the diet her mother had her on). He sent her two dozen after getting the shot.

COMPILED BY JAMES BURRELL

GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: INFO@RUEMORGUE.COM

BODY HORROR



TONY MOORE ZOMBIE

ARTIST: Shaun Kama (halloweentattoos.com)

"I had a kick-ass time creating this zombie tattoo at Festival of Fear 2012. It's an interpretation of zombie art by Tony Moore, the co-creator of *The Walking Dead* [comic]. Tony [pictured in the middle, to the right of Shaun] was at the show and loved it. Tony said he was "blown away" with the colour choice. It took four full hours to do. Happy Halloween, 365 days a year!"

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4. **RATS: NIGHT OF TERROR**
 THORACIC RODENT ERUPTION
5. **THREADS**
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SQUIRM (1976)

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Necronomicomics

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CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS' MINI MONSTERS

(Remco, 1980)

Remco Toys unleashed this line of figures, each just under four inches tall, to stores in 1980. Pint-sized renderings of Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, the Mummy, the Phantom, the Wolf Man and the Creature came packaged on gorgeous cards with black and white artwork of Lugosi, Karloff and Chaney Sr and Jr., and were also released in versions with glow-in-the-dark faces and hands. A battery-operated "Monsterizer" lab table and a haunted house carrying case/playset were sold, as well. Frequently found on eBay, unopened, carded figures often sell for $35 to $50 each, with the very rare Mummy fetching double that amount or more.

JAMES BURRELL

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THE COMPANY THAT BIRTHED HORROR'S MOST CLASSIC CREATURES CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL. *RUE MORGUE* TAKES A HISTORICAL TRIP THROUGH THE BEASTLY BACKLOT OF...

UNIVERSAL

THE STUDIO That MONSTERS BUILT!

by JAMES BURRELL

ASK ANYONE ABOUT DRACULA OR THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER, AND CHANCES ARE THEY'LL DESCRIBE THE COUNT'S HEAVY HUNGARIAN ACCENT AND SATIN-LINED CLOAK, OR THE MONSTER'S FLAT HEAD, GREENISH SKIN AND NECK ELECTRODES.

Instantly recognizable, the Universal monsters are cultural icons that have transcended time. These ghoulish offspring are the product of America's oldest movie studio, which was founded 100 years ago by an enterprising German-Jewish émigré named Carl Laemmle.

After moving to the US in 1884 at the age of seventeen, Laemmle first worked as an accountant in the garment industry. He was inspired to break into the burgeoning film world upon observing the brisk business enjoyed by nickelodeons – small storefront cinemas that charged five-cent admissions – during a trip to Chicago. Opening The White Front Theater in Chicago, in February 1906, he would soon move into distribution with the Laemmle Film Service, which rented short films to other nickelodeons. In 1909, he tried his hand at film production, forming the Independent Moving Pictures Company (IMP), where he introduced the "star system" by advertising a film's performers, prior to this, actors were not billed.

In 1912, after weathering some trouble from the monopolistic Motion Pictures Patents Company – which imposed licensing fees for the use of cameras, film stock, projectors and other patented equipment – Laemmle merged IMP with other independent production companies to form the Universal Film Manufacturing Company, of which he would soon become president, and later buy out his partners. Relocating to Southern California, which both allowed for year-round outdoor filming and provided backdrops as divergent as deserts, mountainous regions and dense woodlands, Laemmle operated out of two different studios before purchasing a 230-acre ranch in the San Fernando Valley in 1914 for $165,000. Along with sets and building facades, housing was also constructed, for studio employees, a number of whom were members of the Laemmle family. In March of 1915, the facilities – christened Universal City – were officially opened. Laemmle, affectionately known as "Uncle Carl," even created what would be the first studio tour, charging the general public 25 cents to watch the filming of various productions.

Known for churning out predominantly low-budget westerns, comedies and serials, the studio would mount the occasional, big-budget "jewel" and "super jewel" production, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), both starring the "Man of a Thousand Faces," Lon Chaney. Based on Victor Hugo's 1831 literary classic, *Hunchback* features Chaney as Quasimodo, the horribly misshapen, deaf and half-blind bell ringer of the Notre Dame de Paris cathedral who pines for a beautiful gypsy named Esmeralda (Patsy Ruth Miller). A cinematic epic flowing with grandiose sets and scenes involving hundreds of extras, it benefitted from Chaney's extraordinary performance and ingenious makeup, and was a huge hit. But Chaney's most famous role was still to come, courtesy of The Phantom. Taking the 1910 novel *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* by Gaston Leroux as its source, the movie tells of Erik (Chaney), a brilliant but hideously deformed composer who resides in the catacombs beneath the Paris Opera House and helps promote the career of Christine Daaé (Mary Philbin), a gifted young singer with whom he is infatuated. It too was a great success.

Universal's other silent efforts with undertones of horror included the darkly comedic *The Cat and the Canary* (1927), an Old Dark House mystery about a group of family members who gather at a creepy mansion for the reading of a will and find themselves targeted by a killer sporting claw-like nails and tusk-like teeth, and *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), the tale of a circus performer (Conrad Veidt: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*) forever forced to wear a ghastly smile due to a childhood mutilation.

By 1929, Laemmle's 21-year-old son, Carl Laemmle Jr., had been made head of production at Universal, taking over the position once held by Irving Thalberg, the highly respected "boy wonder" who had developed such projects as *Hunchback* before being lured over to competitor Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM). An avid reader of gothic literature, "Junior" Laemmle expressed a desire to produce a lavish adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 classic *Dracula*. The novel had already been filmed as the 1922 German production *Nosferatu*, albeit without the consent of the late author's estate. Universal purchased the film rights to the book from Stoker's widow and was hoping to secure Chaney for the lead role of the Transylvanian count, with Tod Browning (with whom Chaney had collaborated on several projects, including the now-lost *London after Midnight*) as director.

Chaney's untimely death from lung cancer in August 1930 forced Laemmle Jr. to search elsewhere for his vampiric nobleman, however. Several actors were considered for the part, including Veidt, but interestingly, not Bela Lugosi. Even though he had successfully portrayed the role in a popular Broadway stage





UNSUNG HORROR HEROES

INTRODUCING SOME LESSER-KNOWN KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO THE UNIVERSAL MONSTER MOVIES

by James Burrell



JOHN L. BALDERSTON

(1889 – 1954)

The former journalist was hired in 1927 to adapt the British stage production of *Dracula* for its American run, and after the play became the basis for the 1931 film, he was approached to help write other Universal horror films, including *Bride of Frankenstein*, *The Mummy* and *Dracula's Daughter*. He received Oscar nominations for both *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) and *Gaslight* (1944).







Village Of The Damned: *Construction of Universal's 'Little Europe" set, which would be used in many of the studio's classic creature features and (below) Carl Laemmle*

adaptation, the 48-year-old Hungarian emigrant found himself having to campaign for the part and agree to a meagre $500 per week salary. The onset of the Great Depression had prompted Laemmle Jr to slash the film's budget and rely on the stage play as the basis for the screenplay, as it was a significantly pared down adaptation of Stoker's story. A Spanish-language version, *Drácula*, was produced simultaneously, using the same sets, but a different cast and crew.

Released on Valentine's Day in 1931, *Dracula* was the first American film that didn't downplay its supernatural elements in favour of a twist ending (i.e., the revelation of some elaborate scheme or hoax), which was standard for thrillers at the time. The movie transformed Lugosi into a star and earned record profits for Universal, leading Laemmle Jr. to order an adaptation of another classic chiller, Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus*.

Originally slated as a follow-up project for Lugosi, Universal wanted its new horror star to portray the monster, but the actor was unhappy at being given a non-speaking role, especially one hidden under layers of makeup. Test footage – with a made-up Lugosi reportedly resembling the titular clay-like being from 1920's *The Golem* – was rejected by Laemmle Jr., who allegedly dismissed it as laughable. (Although concept art featuring Lugosi as a gargantuan being with beams shooting from his eyes still survives, the actual test footage is considered lost.) British stage and film director James Whale was hired to helm the project, finding his ideal choice for the unnamed creature in a 44-year-old British bit player named Boris Karloff.

Whereas Lugosi's makeup in *Dracula* had consisted of only a hairpiece with a widow's peak and some light greasepaint, Karloff's (created by Universal makeup wizard Jack Pierce) was much more elaborate, requiring an estimated four hours to apply. The Frankenstein monster's trademark flat head was built up with layers of cotton and collodion, wax was applied to Karloff's eyelids (at his request) to give his eyes a half-dead look, his fingertips were painted black to give the appearance of blood gathered in the extremities; and he was covered with a greyish-green greasepaint, for a deathly pallor on film. Opening in December of 1931, *Frankenstein* was an even bigger box-office success than *Dracula*.

A string of other Universal horror films followed, including *The Old Dark House* (1932), again starring Karloff, this time as the scarred, mute butler of a spooky old mansion that is home to a very strange family; *The Mummy* (1932), with Karloff (now billed as "Karloff the Uncanny") as both the title character and his modern-day incarnation, Ardeth Bey; *The Invisible Man* (1933), starring Claude Rains as Dr Jack Griffin, the film's manic-ical title character; *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), a darkly comedic masterpiece that reunited Whale with Karloff and his co-stars Colin Clive and Dwight Frye, and also featured Ernest Thesiger as Dr. Pretorius, who forces Henry Frankenstein to create a bride (Elsa Lanchester) for the monster; *Werewolf of London* (1935), starring Henry Hull as Dr. Wilfred Glendon, who turns into a beast after being bitten by a werewolf during an expedition to Tibet; and the Lugosi-Karloff team-ups *The Black Cat* (1934) and *The Raven* (1935), both of which take their titles from Edgar Allan Poe but actually have little to do with his works.

Although the studio's horror output performed consistently well, overspending on other projects landed Universal in financial trouble. Forced to take out a loan to produce the 1936 musical *Show Boat*, the Laemmles found themselves having to put the studio up as collateral. When the film exceeded its schedule and budget, they were unable to repay the loan on time. Stripped of their interests in the company, they retired. "Uncle Carl" died on September 24, 1939, at age 72. Laemmle Jr. passed away 40 years to the day after his father, in 1979.

The studio's new owners, Charles Rogers and J. Cheever Cowdin, had a different vision for "The New Universal," which didn't include horror. A British-instituted ban on horror films in 1935 didn't help matters, either. However, when a 1938 double bill re-release of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* at one cinema was a huge success, executives at the company green-lit 1939's *Son of Frankenstein*, featuring Basil Rathbone (best known for his numerous portrayals of Sherlock Holmes) as Baron Wolf von Frankenstein, who revives his father's creation (Karloff in his third and final performance as the monster), and Lugosi as Ygor, who uses the monster to take revenge upon those who tried to hang him.

Son was a hit, which led to a second wave of quickly produced horror flicks during the late-'30s through to the mid-'40s. These included numerous *Frankenstein* and *Mummy* sequels, "monster rally" films such as *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945), in which several characters appeared in each film; *The Wolf Man* (1941) featuring Lon Chaney Jr. in his iconic role as the tragic Larry Talbot, who, after being bitten by a werewolf (Lugosi), is doomed to becoming a half-man, half-wolf during the full moon; and a lush, 1943 Technicolor remake of *The Phantom of the Opera*, with Claude Rains taking over the Chaney role. From the late-'40s to mid-'50s, Universal also matched up its classic monster characters with popular comedians Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in several outings, including *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.



By the mid-'50s, Universal began shifting from horror to science fiction, with such films as *This Island Earth* (1955), *Tarantula* (1955) and *The Deadly Mantis* (1957). An exception was 1954's *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, a 3-D offering that introduced the amphibious Gill Men, a character that would spawn two sequels. Later that decade, other companies picked up where Universal left off. Britain's Hammer Films, for example, produced its own

series of full-colour *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Mummy* movies featuring new horror stars such as Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. But the original black and white classics would find younger audiences when they made their television premieres in a syndicated package called *Shock! Theater*. The broadcasts – often introduced by a local horror host – ignited a 1960s monster boom, which gave rise to monster magazines, plastic model kits, rubber masks and numerous toys.

Universal gave us more than vampires, werewolves and man-made creatures, though. The studio also owned the rights to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (initially distributed by Paramount in 1960, but later bought and re-released by Universal in 1968) and went on to produce three sequels to the film between 1983 and 1990. It was also behind one of the most popular films of all time: 1975's *Jaws*, and its three sequels. (Later, it would produce sequels in the *Halloween* slasher franchise, see p 40; and John Carpenter's *The Thing*, as well)

Then, in 1979, the studio mounted a big budget *Dracula* remake, which was based on the Broadway stage production and featured the play's star, Frank Langella, in the role of the Count. It would take another two decades before Universal released more "re-imaginings" of its early horror films, including 1999's *The Mummy*, the success of which spawned numerous sequels and video game adaptations, 2004's *Van Helsing*, the equivalent of the studio's earlier monster rally films, and 2010's *The Wolfman*.

Though many were released more than 80 years ago, the classic Universal monster films created much of the iconography associated with modern horror – everything from creepy, cobwebbed castles to the use of electricity as a means to resurrect the dead. Their influence is endless and their appeal is, appropriately, universal. To help us celebrate the 100th anniversary, we spoke with one of the foremost authorities on the studio and its rich legacy of horror cinema, author and historian David J. Skal, whose non-fiction books include *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen*, the absolutely essential *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*, *Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning*, *Hollywood's Master of the Macabre* and an upcoming book on Bram Stoker. With his numerous appearances in featurettes on the Universal monster movie re-releases, there's no one better suited to remark on the studio's history. To round things out, we also speak with Universal horror actors Carla Laemmle (the original *Dracula* and *The Phantom of the Opera*), Julie Adams (*Creature From the Black Lagoon*), the children of the legendary Universal monster stars, and investigate the real Castle Frankenstein. Happy birthday to the original home of monsters! Take it away, David.



What were some of the key forces that led to the birth of the Universal monster movies?

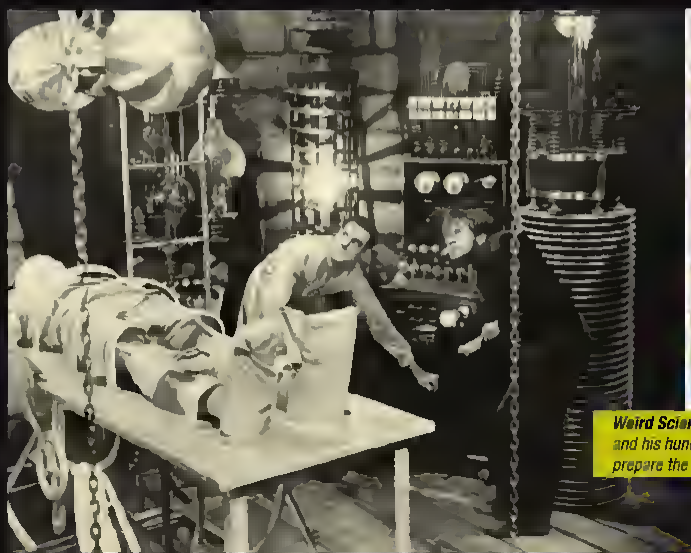
Universal was very practical and innovative for its time. It was the first studio that could see the value of producing sequels to *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and the others. Other studios had done shockers as well, some of which actually had better production values. Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* came out shortly after *Frankenstein* but Paramount decided to let it sit and not cook up a sequel. [But] Universal saw the possibility of a franchise, an ongoing product; and it was probably the result of the studio's long track record of being a reliable supplier of programmers – westerns, serials, all of those. Without Universal's original horror cycle [of the 1930s], then its second horror cycle [of the '40s], then its science fiction cycle in the '50s, a lot of people who produced some of the most influential films of all time wouldn't have got into the business. It's amazing how many people – names like Spielberg – were inspired by their discovery of these old Universal pictures. And not on their first releases either. That was something else that Universal did: they made these cycles of films and they revived them on a regular basis, and that was rather innovative.

What made Universal horror films so successful with audiences of the day?

They are such iconic and familiar figures now that you need to put yourself in the frame of mind of what it was like to encounter these [films] for the first time. They were extremely novel and groundbreaking. In the silent era, you had a tradition of frightening characters, but they were always human beings. And if there seemed to be a ghostly occurrance, it was always revealed to be the result of human machination, usually by somebody trying to embezzle or inherit money. This came out of the stage tradition of the drawing room mystery melodramas that were very popular, such as *The Cat and the Canary*.

Dracula was also developed from the stage play version of Bram Stoker's novel.

Dracula had been a big hit on the stage, and it was a frankly supernatural melodrama. The horrors were not explained away as some criminal conspiracy or plot the way they were in *London after Midnight*, which Tod Browning made in 1927 with Lon Chaney. Suddenly, in this very chaotic year of 1931, when the Depression was at its peak and there was no social safety net, this figure of Count Dracula was something very new and very appropriate for the time. It was like a lightning rod for all of the free-floating anxieties and fears people were having to deal with. *Frankenstein* was almost supernatural in nature, so although there was more of a scientific rationale to it, [the Frankenstein monster] is a fantastic monster, never likely to exist in the real world. Carl Laemmle Jr. loved the Chaney films and loved melodrama and the macabre, and it was





Weird Science: *Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) and his hunchbacked lab assistant (Dwight Frye) prepare the lab in* ***Frankenstein****.*



HANS J. SALTER

(1896 – 1994)

Before immigrating to the US in 1937, Salter attended the Vienna Academy of Music, was music director of the Berlin State Opera and worked for film studio UFA. Along with Frank Skinner, whose music often appeared in the same films, the six-time Oscar nominee helped provide the likes of *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), *The Wolf Man* (1941) and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) with their distinctive sound.



CARLA LAEMMLE, ACTRESS AND NIECE OF THE FOUNDER OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, TAKES US BACK TO THE DAYS WHEN SHE LIVED AMONGST THE CLASSIC CREATURES

MONSTER MAIDEN

by JAMES BURRELL

AT NEARLY 103 YEARS OLD, CARLA LAEMMLE IS ONE OF THE LAST SURVIVING cast members from Universal's first cycle of horror classics. The niece of Universal Studios' founder Carl Laemmle Sr., the Chicago-born actress and dancer appeared as a ballerina in 1925's *The Phantom of the Opera* and has the distinction of speaking the first lines of dialogue for a sound horror film in 1931's *Dracula* (she is pictured above, in glasses). Laemmle retired from show business in the late 1930s, but returned 60 years later to both host and appear in documentaries on *Dracula* and *The Phantom of the Opera*.

More recently, she collaborated on a biography of her life by Rick Atkins called *Among the Rugged Peaks* and the illustrated storybook *Growing Up With Monsters: My Times at Universal Studios in Rhymes*. She has also resumed her acting career, appearing in the new horror flick *Mansion of Blood*, starring Gary Busey. We called Laemmle at her home in California to learn more about her years at Universal.

Were there dedicated monster fans back when you made these movies?

There have always been fans, but it was all very new to me at the time. I wasn't really involved with [them]. But now, of course, I'm deluged with fan mail. From all over the world, not just the United States. I love it.

What was it like growing up on the Universal lot?

We moved into a little bungalow there. I had my mother, father and grandmother that came out from Chicago. My uncle felt that the climate out in California would be better for my father, that he wouldn't have to suffer the cold of Chicago and all of that. I lived at Universal for fourteen years . . . I had the privilege of going all over the lot, and the stages – wherever I wanted to – and watching them film. So, it was pretty exciting for a little girl like me, growing up.

One of the films you observed being made was the 1923 version of The Hunchback of Notre Dame with Lon Chaney.

I was really fortunate that I could see them making that movie – to be able to watch [Chaney] perform was pretty wonderful, you know.

Two years later, you appeared in The Phantom of the Opera as the prima ballerina in the opening sequence.

I studied ballet, and that was going to be my career. But later, I decided that I wanted to be an actress. So, with the background that I had, I could combine [acting] with being a dancer and take part in any movie that had dancing in it.

In Dracula, you actually spoke the first lines ever heard in a sound horror film. What do you recall of that scene in the coach?

I had a great advantage because I didn't have to learn the lines. I just read from the little script that I had and didn't have to memorize anything because it was all right there. I was supposed to be reading it. It was a real coach, they had a couple of men who were unseen by the camera, who would be outside jigging it to give the appearance that we were riding on a rough road, even though we were stationary the whole time.

Your cousin, Carl Laemmle Jr., was made head of the company by your uncle in 1929. And it was his idea for Universal to make many of the classic horror films.

My uncle wasn't too enthused about it, but Junior urged him so much – and Junior had a lot of impact on my uncle – that he went along with it. And that's really how Universal became a specialist in making these horror movies. My uncle became a horror lover because [those movies] made a lot of money.

Was Junior a fan of the original novels written by Bram Stoker and Mary Shelley?

Oh yes, he loved those stories.

Your family lost control of Universal in the mid-1930s. How did this affect you?

It was a very tough time. Of course, my uncle had to sell the studio, we were going through the Depression, and there was a lot of money that he lost. Making movies doesn't come cheap, you know. As the bills were mounting up, he couldn't pay them anymore. So he had to sell the studio and we had to move [from the lot]. It broke my heart.

Why did Universal achieve such success with their horror films?

Universal wanted to shock people. They wanted to make them excited, stimulate their curiosity and make them want to go to the movies. The company really did put out the best horror movies.

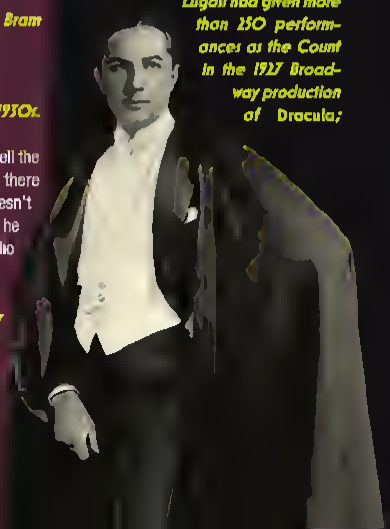
through his insistence, rather than his father's, that the Universal horror cycle got rolling. It has been said that it was *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* that saved the studio from bankruptcy in 1931. It was a very, very tough time [economically], and without Universal, Hollywood history would really be quite different.

How important was Carl Laemmle Jr. in the development of Universal's horror output?

Carl Laemmle Jr. was completely responsible for Universal Monsters happening at all. He was an odd little personality, but thank god for him. He single-handedly made the Universal Monster legacy happen. He was the original Monster Kid, and we all owe him a great debt of gratitude.

Lon Chaney was reportedly the first choice for the role of Count Dracula, but he, of course, passed away before production began. How do you think his performance would have compared to that of Lugosi?

I think it would have been very different. Laemmle Sr agreed to buy the rights only if Junior would obtain the services of Chaney. But Chaney really wasn't ever a practical consideration, he had a checkered history with Universal, and *The Phantom of the Opera* was not a happy experience for either Chaney or the studio. And he had his health problems, which were carefully guarded, and he did die of lung cancer. But the studio made overtures, and there were some proposed contracts – even one document I found that said he might play a dual role, which would have been fascinating, as he would have obviously been playing both Dracula and Van Helsing, much the way he had played both the vampire and police inspector in *London after Midnight*.



Lugosi had given more than 250 performances as the Count in the 1927 Broadway production of Dracula;

why was there still some trepidation on the part of Universal in having him take on the role in the film version?

Though Lugosi had made a handful of silent films, he was not a star. Universal felt that *Dracula* was risky and that's why Laemmle Sr. wanted Chaney, who was a bankable star. A lot of things in Hollywood are just the way they always were. Many Broadway hits go to the screen without the actors who originated the parts on stage, so that's not surprising. But Lugosi pestered them and he made it very clear that he was hungry for the part, which is never a good negotiating position. ... He did become one of the most iconic screen characters of all time, though, and there's no denying that. Lugosi was born to play that role, he inhabited it better than almost any actor ever has. No actor can play the part without some reference to Lugosi, even if he is trying to play against the Lugosi part.

It's also been said that much of Dracula was actually directed by cinematographer Karl Freund, rather than Tod Browning.

A lot of the deficiencies with *Dracula* are Browning's discomfort with working with speaking actors. In the silent days, he gave directions to the actors while they were working and he developed a lot of the script himself. The business was changing, and he was not. When David Manners [who starred in the film as John Harker] told me he was just a shadowy presence in the back of the set and that Karl Freund directed all the scenes he was involved in, I took him at his word. Browning was supposed to do more pictures for Universal than he did, but he high-tailed it back to MGM, [where] they thought they could build on his success with *Dracula* by doing their own horror films. That turned out to be *Freaks* and that was a box-office disaster for them, and marked the end of Browning's career.

Carl Laemmle Jr. seemed to give Frankenstein director James Whale a lot of freedom to do what he wanted, maybe more so than most directors would have received.

I don't know about that. You don't feel Whale's personality in the original *Frankenstein* film as much as we feel it in *The Old Dark House* and *The Invisible Man*. It was his way in the door. Universal was a kind of down-and-dirty factory in a way that MGM was not. MGM was really a class act even if it was a factory – it was a brilliant factory. A lot of Universal was shooting from the hip and Browning was not comfortable there. He was never able to re-establish himself at MGM either. It's a sad story. He was a brilliant director, the rhythms and conventions of silent film really suited him. *Dracula* is like a bad dream. I like to call it the most influential bad movie ever made.



Caped Crusaders. Carlos Villarías and Lupita Tovar in *Drácula* and (opposite inset) Bela Lugosi in the stage version of *Dracula*



IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT **DRACULA** AND **FRANKENSTEIN** SAVED UNIVERSAL FROM BANKRUPTCY.
DAVID J. SKAL

Was the decision by Universal to base Dracula and Frankenstein on the stage productions about economics, or would it have simply been too difficult to produce faithful adaptations of the novels?

Originally, *Dracula* was intended to be what they called a "super production," along the lines of [1930's] *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which was a big, prestigious film and a major hit. The onset of the Great Depression just changed that plan completely. Some of the earlier script treatments for *Dracula* were very ambitious in reproducing the sweep and scope of Stoker's novel, but in the end, they settled for the stage-bound confines of the Broadway play. And that obviously is the greatest weakness of *Dracula*. It becomes a very stagey, talky kind of piece.

The Spanish-language version, Drácula, is often cited as being superior to its English counterpart, particularly from a technical standpoint. What are your feelings about it?

It was very ambitious and has to be understood in the context of the man who produced it, Paul Kohner, who was originally thought to be the heir apparent to Universal. He was Laemmle's protege in the '20s and it was a shock to a lot of people when Julius Laemmle Jr. – who then took the name Carl Laemmle Jr. – was given the reins of the studio as a 21st birthday present. Kohner had wanted to do *Dracula* in the great tradition of German Expressionism and wanted Paul Leni, the great European director who had done Universal's *The Cat and the Canary*, but died of blood poisoning very tragically. So, Kohner was obviously stung by Laemmle Jr.'s ascendancy, but he had been assigned the task of producing foreign language, simultaneously filmed versions of Universal's domestic product ... and *Dracula* was the most ambitious because I think that Kohner had an axe to grind. He had his director, George Melford, and the crew look at rushes of Tod Browning's film every day and improve upon them. It was really a rival production, and from the standpoint of cinematography and visual effects, it is quite superior – and was made for a tiny fraction of [the cost of] the American film. It did very well and was the only version of *Dracula* to be seen throughout much of the Spanish-speaking world for decades.

You were directly involved with its restoration, correct?

I was lucky enough to assist in the restoration of the film. The negatives existed at the Library



DWIGHT FRYE
(1899 – 1943)

Frye was an accomplished Broadway actor before portraying fly-eating Renfield in *Dracula* (1931), the sadistic, hunchbacked lab assistant Fritz in *Frankenstein* (1931), and murderous grave robber Karl in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). Longing to work in other genres but typecast as a madman, the brilliant actor was set to play a major role in the 1944 biopic *Wilson* before he died of a heart attack.





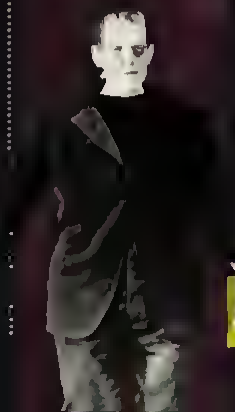


CURT SIODMAK
(1902 – 2000)

Author and screenwriter Siodmak emigrated from Germany to America in 1937 to escape the country's growing anti-Semitism. His most famous work remains the screenplay for *The Wolf Man* (1941) but he's also known for working on *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1946), and his 1942 novel *Donavan's Brain*, which has been adapted for film several times

ASK AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD KID TO DRAW A PICTURE OF THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER AND IT WILL LOOK A LOT LIKE KARLOFF NOT ROBERT DE NIRO.

DAVID J. SKAL



of Congress but one reel was completely deteriorated. I obtained a research visa to go to the Cinemateca de Cuba in Havana in 1989 and was able to view it and make frame blow-ups of the missing material, which I included in my book *Hollywood Gothic*. It came to the attention of Universal and, in 1992, they were finally able to secure that missing reel and restore the film for home video release.

Let's switch gears to the other big monster film out that year, Frankenstein. The monster role remains Karloff's most famous screen appearance. What is it about his three turns as the Frankenstein monster (also in Bride and Son of Frankenstein) that remain so affecting?

It's something he has in common with Lugosi's Dracula in that in both of these films, although they were early talkies, they are largely silent, as far as these characters are concerned. They are primarily visual images in the film, and I think that helps them take root in the popular imagination. I don't know how intentional it was, but it certainly works on that level, as they are largely mute performances and they depend on the particular presence of two unique actors. For Karloff, the most telling thing about the makeup is that it gives full play to his features. It is not this heavy, disfiguring piece of work. – Karloff's face is allowed full expression and he gives a fantastic pantomime performance with it. He and James Whale saw the pathos in the character. In the script that was offered to Lugosi by Robert Florey [who was originally attached to direct *Frankenstein*], you don't have that at all. The monster was a kind of killing machine and there was no sympathy. It was often said that it was because of Lugosi's vanity and other reasons that he turned down the heavily made-up role without dialogue. And that's not really the case, he turned down what would have been a bad part. It was completely rethought when James Whale entered the picture and Whale saw something in Karloff's face and presence as an actor that could be exploited.

Whale reportedly had much more trouble adapting H.G. Wells' The Invisible Man, but in this case, H.G. Wells was very much alive. How much was the author involved in the film?

He had approval of the final script, which makes it extraordinary that so many completely off-the-mark treatments and scripts were done. I think it's telling that it was Whale's friend R.C. Sherriff who, when he was brought on board, decided to go back to the original book. Sherriff brought it back to be very much in keeping with Wells' intention, with the exception of having the invisibility make the scientist go crazy. That addition of megalomania was something that Wells wasn't really happy with, but he didn't use his veto power.

Jack Pierce's designs for the Frankenstein monster, the Mummy and the Wolf Man were groundbreaking. How integral were these makeups to the success of the films?

They had a lot to do with it. The reasons for the Frankenstein monster working – and it works on a number of levels all at once – is the strange amalgam of a robot and an ape. This idea of evolutionary backsliding has always been a part of the classic horror formulas, going back to the 1890s and *The Island of Dr Moreau*, and *Dracula* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. We have this monster that kind of looks like one of those heroic art deco statues of the late 1920s all kind of

Now You See Him: *(top) The Invisible Man (Claude Rains) hides his condition and (inset) Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein monster.*

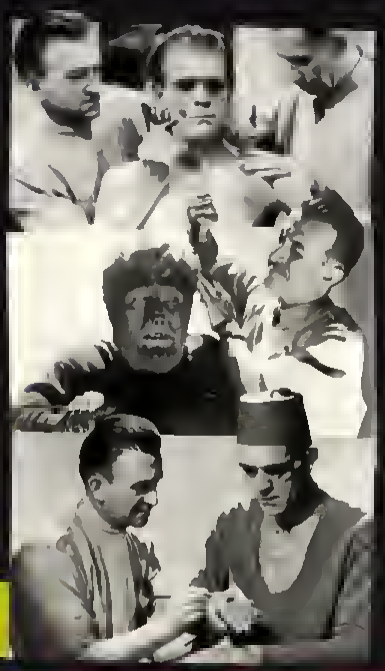
broken apart and then glued clumsily back together, and it has this overhanging brow that makes it look like an ape, the extended arms made more simian by cutting the sleeves short. He's wearing asphalt spreader boots and workman's clothes. He's both a displaced figure, and given the horror [genre's] connection to World War I, he's an image of shell shock. It works on so many levels. And that is one of the reasons why that is the image of the Frankenstein monster that sticks in the minds of people today who have never seen the original film. Ask an eight-year-old kid to draw a picture of the Frankenstein monster and it will look a lot like Karloff, not Robert De Niro.

Several of the classic Universal horror films are surprisingly subversive. How did the filmmakers deal with censorship?

In the early days, it was easy to get around the [Motion Picture] Production Code because, until about 1933 or '34, it wasn't really enforced. The studios did have to deal with big censor boards, which would sniff out things they found objectionable, for instance, they didn't like the scenes in *Dracula* showing a skeleton in a coffin. It sounds ridiculous today, but there were many cuts. There were certain state censors that would control whole regions of the country, so there were varying cuts to these films that floated around. The main trick the screenwriters used was to present scripts that were just loaded [with subversive elements], which they never expected to get into the final production, that they could give up. So there would be extreme violence, extreme melodrama and extreme situations. In the case of *Bride of Frankenstein*, Whale just had on the fact that the censors were very literal-minded and kind of stupid and didn't have a sense of humour. He had a wicked sense of humour and fell back on the predominance of Christian imagery in the film as kind of a defense of it – when he was [actually] making the almost blasphemous association of the Frankenstein monster and Christ. That is one of the best preserved correspondence we have between a wickedly subversive director and an uncomprehending censor board.

The monsters are outsiders, constantly persecuted by villagers and the police. As a gay director, was Whale trying to sneak in commentary about discrimination against homosexuals?

Definitely. Whale had outsider status himself and that informed everything he did. But in terms of making an overt plea for tolerance, no. In Whale's case, it was a very recognizable brand of gay humour, later to be known as camp, that he was obviously revelling in, in



Monster Makeovers. *Universal's legendary makeup man Jack Pierce prepares his creatures for the camera*

THE CHILDREN OF **BORIS KARLOFF** AND **BELA LUGOSI** REFLECT ON THEIR FATHERS' LEGACIES

The CREATURES' Kids

by **SEAN PLUMMER**

IN THE DECADES SINCE THEIR FATHERS' DEATHS – Boris Karloff in 1969, Bela Lugosi in 1956 – Sara Karloff and Bela Lugosi Jr. have become caretakers of their legacies. Sara formed Karloff Enterprises in 1993 to license her father's image and LA-based lawyer Bela Jr. runs Lugosi.com, a clearing house for all things Lugosi, from wines to guitars to comic books.

"I'm very interested in preserving that," says Lugosi Jr., "and I'm very blessed to have this heritage. I knew there was something extraordinary about [my father] because of all the attention he would get every time we would be somewhere."

"It's a privilege and a pleasure," Sara says of her lineage. "I'm nothing but a conduit; it's really got nothing to do with me. These fans of my father's are multi-generational. They stand in line to ask me questions they wished they'd had an opportunity to ask [my father]. They treat me with the respect that my father's career and my father's persona deserved."

Sara, 73, and Bela Jr., 74, became friends after meeting in 1993 at a *Famous Monsters of Filmland* convention – which may surprise some fans given the rumoured rivalry between Boris and Bela. (That conflict may have been generated by Universal Studios' publicity machine to bolster the images of their best-known talents.) One possibly apocryphal story has Lugosi, a big star after the success of *Dracula*, turning down the role of Frankenstein's monster because of its lack of dialogue and heavy makeup. *Frankenstein*, of course, went on to be a huge success and made Karloff a star, helping him branch out into radio, theatre and the new medium of television, as he had no such misgivings about the nature of his fame. Sara points out that her father had been a starving actor in Hollywood for ten years before *Frankenstein* came along, and he never forgot the lean years, even after he became a horror hero.

"*Frankenstein* was his 81st film, and hardly anybody had seen his first 80," Sara points out. "So that made a difference in his life, and he was always grateful. He often referred tongue-in-cheek to the monster as his best friend, and he did not mind being typecast. It was a question he was often asked, and he said he was very, very lucky."

Lugosi Jr. says that he can't speak to his father's feelings towards Karloff, but notes, "I don't recall Dad saying anything derogatory about him" – adding that his father viewed his immortal role of Dracula as "a blessing and a curse. It kept him working, but it also limited his creative and artistic endeavours."

He also believes that his father's legacy was tarnished by the 1994 Tim Burton film *Ed Wood*, about the relationship between Lugosi (played by Martin Landau in an Oscar-winning performance) and the supposed worst director ever. The infamous Wood befriended the drug-addicted thespian late in life, casting him as a mad scientist in *Bride of the Monster* (1955) and shoehorning footage of Lugosi, filmed shortly before his death, into the much-maligned *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959).

"They had him doing things he didn't do," says Lugosi Jr. of the portrayal. "I didn't appreciate that, especially because it wasn't true. Martin Landau did a good job of portraying Dad at the end of his life, but they were not his most glorious years depicted in that movie. But what I've learned – even though I didn't have this feeling – is that when people talk about that motion picture that it was more of a tribute to Dad, or at least it was intended to be."

That said, although Sara and Bela Jr. continue to uphold their famous fathers' horror legacies, to them, the men were first and foremost dads.

"I don't think youngsters are very much aware," says Sara of her father's years in the Universal spotlight. "He didn't really talk about his work."



The Lugosis



The Karloffs

MORE THAN 50 YEARS AFTER **CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON** FIRST SWAM AGAINST THE CURRENTS OF COLD WAR HORROR, STAR **JULIE ADAMS** AND FILM HISTORIAN **TOM WEAVER** REFLECT ON UNIVERSAL'S LAST GREAT MONSTER FRANCHISE

HORROR *From The* DEPTHS

by APRIL SNELLINGS

IN THE 1950S, A REVOLUTION WAS CHURNING THE WATERS OF GENRE CINEMA. Audiences were losing interest in the gothic monsters of the '30s and '40s as the twin spectres of the Cold War and atom-age science were shaping the new silver-screen heavies. In 1951, *The Thing from Another World* arrived in a flying saucer instead of a creaky coffin; two years later, an atomic bomb awakened *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. But even as Universal began to mine the dark reaches of outer space, the studio would find its last great monster in the black waters of the Amazonian jungle.

Like the doomed anti-hero of 1941's *The Wolf Man*, the titular beastie of *Creature from the Black Lagoon* can trace his origins to folklore. Though *Creature* was released in 1954, the Gill Man first stirred producer William Alland's imagination at a dinner party hosted by Orson Welles more than a decade earlier. Also present that night in 1940 was Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa, who regaled his colleagues with tales of a half-man, half-fish monstrosity that terrorized South American villagers. According to film historian Tom Weaver, who has written extensively about *Creature* and its two sequels and recorded audio commentaries for the DVD releases of all three films, Alland finally put the idea to paper in 1952 as *The Sea Monster*. Things moved quickly from there, with the Creature then earning the name "Lagoon Man" when it was first screen tested in 1953. Soon after, Alland went scouting in Florida, where he was being shown around by accomplished swimmer Ricou Browning, who would go on to occupy the Creature suit while it was in the water. Getting the right look for the monster proved to be difficult, however.

"The first suit made for him was smooth – none of the armoured scales – and the head was a goofy-looking thing that made him look like a friendly pollywog," explains Weaver. "Chris Mueller, one of the sculptors who worked on the suit, called this first suit 'the pollywog,' so I do too. Nobody thought much of it, so with just a few weeks to go before the start of shooting, another suit – the one we see in the movie – was made and screen tested and refined."

Julie Adams, a Universal contract actress who was then best known for her work in comedies and westerns, was assigned the pivotal role of Kay Lawrence, a beautiful ichthyologist who becomes the unwilling object of the Gill Man's affections. Initially, Adams (credited in the film as Julia Adams) didn't share Alland's enthusiasm for the scaly Creature.

"My first thought was, 'The creature from what?'" remembers Adams. "I thought about turning it down, but then I thought, 'Gosh, if I turn it down, they'll put me on suspension and I won't get paid.' So I read the script, and it wasn't bad. I thought, 'What the hey? It might be fun.'"

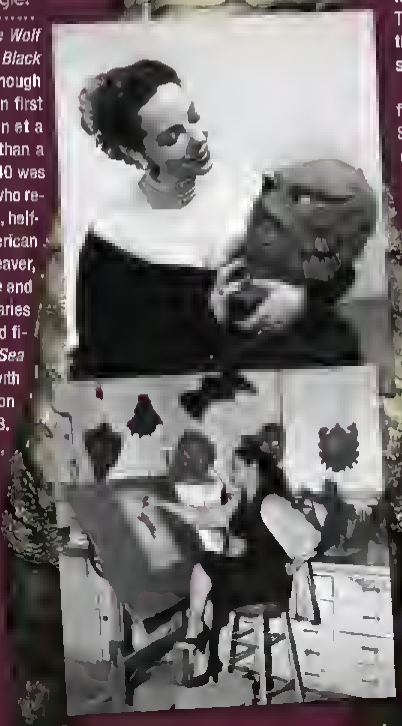
Scripted by Arthur A. Ross and Harry Essex, *Creature* follows a fossil-hunting expedition to a legendary Amazonian lagoon. The team of scientists get more than they bargained for when they cross paths with the volatile Gill Man – a hulking monstrosity that sets his amorous sights on Adams' character.

Things get weird early in the film, when the Creature performs a voyeuristic, aquatic mating dance opposite Ginger Stanley, who served as Adams' underwater stunt double. (Though Kay never becomes aware of the Creature's presence in the scene, it is often considered an inspiration for *Jaws*' violent, disturbing opener.) Adams sees him as a lonesome, misunderstood relic of a bygone era.

"The audience feels a lovely kind of empathy for the Creature, and that isn't always true in scary movies. I don't think we ever really talked about it, but it is definitely part of the film. It was clear that it was happening, both in the script and during our rehearsals."

If the libidinous nature of the Gill Man is elusive, the controversy surrounding his design doesn't make him any easier to nail down. Makeup artist Bud Westmore (1918 – 1973) is officially credited with the Creature's iconic look, but many consider Millicent Patrick (1915 – 1998) to be the monster's true creator.

Patrick was an actress and former Disney animator who designed creatures for Universal's *It Came from Outer Space*, *This Island Earth* and *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. According to a



Aqua Man: *Creature creator Millicent Patrick in a pair of publicity shots and (opposite) Julie Adams preparing for test footage with the "pollywog" prototype suit*

publicity bio prepared by Universal, Patrick spent six weeks working on the design of the Gill Man. "He changed his shape three times before he was able to win the approval of the executives who inspected him," Patrick is quoted as saying in the bio. "No matter how badly he scares people, I think he's cute."

Ahead of *Creature*'s March 1954 release, Universal sent Patrick out on a publicity tour. "Westmore hated that idea," Weaver explains. "He was very upset about it, so Patrick was sent out with the directive to 'talk up' the movie, but always to include mentions of Westmore as the creator who supervised everything from start to finish. She did a great job on the tour, according to everything I've read, but when it was over, Westmore still wasn't happy and let it be known he'd never use her again. And he didn't."

Regardless of who ultimately deserves kudos for the Gill Man's design, its impact is undeniable. While Browning played the monster in the water, on land the Creature was portrayed by Ben Chapman, a towering ex-Marine. Adams vividly recalls the first time she saw Chapman in his full Gill Man getup.

"I was awestruck that it looked so real and yet so strange," says the actress, who wrote about her experiences on the set of *Creature* in her 2011 autobiography *The Lucky Southern Star: Reflections from the Black Lagoon*. "There's a publicity shot that they took when [Chapman] walked out, and my mouth is hanging open. I was clearly quite impressed by it, as we all have been over the years."

Though the original treatment ended with the Gill Men being eaten by piranhas, Allend had the foresight to send the wounded and lovelorn Creature back into his lagoon in one piece. As the star of Universal's last great monster franchise, the Gill Man would resurface in two sequels, *Revenge of the Creature* in 1955 and *The Creature Walks among Us* the following year.

"Allend seemed to know the Creature was going to be a monster worthy of a series à la Dracula, Frankenstein and the others," Weaver says. "He rejected [the original] ending because he wanted the monster to continue into sequels. He knew how much appeal the Creature would have."





Friends?: *The Monster meets Little Maria (Marilyn Harris)*



a number of his films, most visibly in *Bride of Frankenstein*, but also in *The Old Dark House* and *The Invisible Man*. In terms of the original *Frankenstein*, since the basic story was kind of in place when he came on, he wasn't able to shape that very much. He didn't want to do a sequel to *Frankenstein* and finally agreed to do it only when he had established his clout with the studio and could have complete creative control and get away with outrageous things [such as] the blasphemy posing as piety and his brilliant casting of Ernest Thesiger as Dr. Pretorius, obviously a flamboyantly gay character. But there's nothing in the script or the action that gives that away. So, it's one of those flamboyantly camp performances in Hollywood history and it's just hidden in plain sight.

Among the significant cuts made to Frankenstein, the scene of the creature throwing the little girl in the lake and Henry Frankenstein declaring, "Now I know what it feels like to be God" were restored. What was your involvement with this, and is there any other significant content still lost to the censors?

There were shots of the girl struggling in the water and sinking that had never been fully restored. I will take credit for "Now I know what it feels like to be God" getting back in there. I sneaked it into my documentary [*The Frankenstein Files* for the 2004 *Frankenstein* Legacy DVD release] and it was a strange story. The recording had been offered to Universal previously, and had been discovered by well-known collector Don Glut, who did a reel-to-reel recording of the sound discs back in the '60s and '70s. So it was always there and it was a jaw-dropping find, but you know, Universal isn't run by preservationists and horror movie fans. One of the reasons they gave me the job of doing all those extras was because they told me, "We don't know anything about these films. But you do."

There were also sequences shot for* The Mummy*, in which the reincarnated Princess Ankh-es-en-amon is put to death, and scenes in* Bride of Frankenstein *that do not appear in the finished films. Does any of this material still exist?

No, the footage just wasn't preserved. Studios aren't good about preserving older camera negatives, even today. So, back in those days when there wasn't even the thought of people studying these films or wanting to recut them or even revive them, the studios were not good at keeping track of that stuff and it was just discarded.

Dracula's Daughter* (1936) *was the last film in Universal's original horror cycle before the Laemmles were forced out. How did this change the course of the company in terms of its horror output?

It disrupted it completely. Standard histories on horror films say that because of an embargo on horror films by Great Britain, Universal cut back, and that isn't really the case when you examine the circumstances and the output. There was a complete creative turnover and it took a couple of years for the "New Universal" to get its bearings. It was clear there was a big market for horror pictures as World War II was moving [ahead], and Universal got back into the saddle, starting with *Son of Frankenstein*.





FRANK SKINNER
(1897 – 1963)

After playing in a band as a teen, Skinner started writing songs in the mid-'20s and authored two books on music before becoming a composer – first for MGM, then Universal. His Universal scores (often featured alongside music from Hans J. Salter) include *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), *Son of Dracula* (1943), *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *The Leech Woman* (1960). He was a five-time Academy Award nominee.

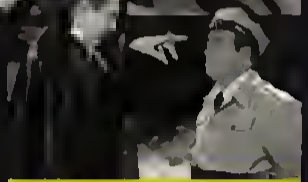




KENNETH STRICKFADEN
(1895 – 1984)

An ex-Marine who worked in amusement parks, repaired and flew airplanes, and raced cars, Strickfaden created the famous lab equipment (including the Nebulanum) in *Frankenstein* (1931). A set designer, electrician and special effects engineer, he also provided Tesla-inspired machinery for *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and '60s TV hit *The Munsters*. He finally received a screen credit when his original *Frankenstein* props was reused in *Young Frankenstein* (1974).





Hairy Situations: *(from top) The Bride (Elsa Lanchester) from* ***Bride of Frankenstein****, Lon Chaney Jr. as the titular Wolf Man, and Bela Lugosi as Dracula manacles Wilbur (Lou Costello) in* ***Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein****.*

and the second wave of horror films, which made Lon Chaney Jr. a new horror icon. There's been a fairly unbroken public appetite for scary entertainment ever since Universal broke the rules and brought in "real" blood-sucking demons and man-made monsters – it really hasn't gone away since.

You mentioned Chaney Jr.; his big horror break was of course The Wolf Man. Screenwriter Curt Siodmak introduced much of the folklore that is now associated with werewolves in that film, such as the poem, "Even a man who is pure in heart," the pentagram that marks the werewolf's victim, and so on. As a German Jew, did Siodmak draw upon events from Nazi Germany?

The star marking people for death in 1940s Europe has one association. How conscious was he about that? Well, it effected him. He did share with me some of his thoughts about Chaney Jr., and he found him to be a troubled, tormented personality. Chaney Jr had very mixed feelings about his father and taking the name Lon Chaney Jr. He had a very self-sabotaging personality and he struggled with alcoholism throughout his career.

Would you say that the World Wars and the Great Depression were the most influential factors on these movies?

I think so, you can throw in the Cold War and the atomic age, as well. Generally speaking, I think horror entertainment is in many ways inspired by, not always consciously or directly, large social problems and upheavals – be they economic, military or political. Certainly the sexual revolution, the AIDS epidemic, all of these things over time have all enforced fashions in scary entertainment. It's not so much by design, but by a certain kind of theme or character or plot that takes the fancy of the public, and other films imitate it because it is a successful formula. We saw this at the very beginning in Germany with prototype horror pictures such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Nosferatu* especially, which were intentional statements about the war that had just passed. In America, there was no similar attempt to codify the onset of the Great Depression in these classic monsters, but I don't think they would have taken root in a happier year. It was a very lucky – or unlucky – convergence, considerate of social conditions and opportunity, or a hole that could be filled. It took the Great Depression to make films like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, and that changed American moviemaking for all time.

From the late-'40s to the mid-'50s, the Universal monsters were paired up with Abbott and Costello. Did these movies keep the cycle alive or kill it?

No, no, the pendulum swings with all of these characters. They're all survivors. Our favourite monsters know how to adapt and change with the times. We've seen the pendulum swing from pure horror to pure comedy. Horror and comedy have a lot in common. They both elicit a physiological response: a scream or a laugh. They're both ways of releasing tension and they go very well together.

Was it simply the swing of the pendulum when Universal embraced science fiction films in the 1950s?

It was the next obvious thing. You couldn't, after World War II, deal with ideas about mad scientists without bringing atomic energy into the fold. Completely new developments like flying saucers and the idea of aliens also took root in the public imagination. And Count Dracula's crypt was kind of traded in for the fallout shelter.

Universal owned other popular genre properties, such as Psycho, which was initially distributed by Paramount but re-released by Universal in 1968. What changes in society were reflected this time?

In the case of *Psycho*, an amazing and groundbreaking film for reasons that have nothing to do with horror movies, some of the central iconography is the house, that haunted house. And there is the ghost of Mrs Bates, who essentially possesses her son. So, even though it is thought of as a psychological, rather than a supernatural, horror

film, it's pressing all the supernatural buttons. I'm amazed when watching a lot of old episodes of *Thriller* from the 1960s, how many times the house from *Psycho* actually appears as an old-fashioned haunted house in stories about vampires and ghosts. [Hitchcock's] *The Birds* [1963, also Universal] owes a lot to the science fiction cycle of the '50s, which Universal was very much a part of with the idea of nature run amok and animals becoming monsters. We are interested in monsters because they have something to do with us: either we think of ourselves as abject and marginalized, or aggressive, with possessive impulses that we don't want to look at too closely. And that's exactly what the *Psycho* movies do so well.

Universal has also remade some of its horror films; remakes include the 1979 version of Dracula, 1999's The Mummy and 2010's The Wolfman. How successful were they in adapting these classic films for more modern audiences?

Well, I still really enjoy the [Frank] Langella [version of] *Dracula*, as he really nails the romantic conception of the monster. That particular one is drawn from the same stage play as the Lugosi film, and it holds up very, very well. The others have been less successful and tend not to hold up well. In attempting to do something different with the classic characters and the actors who played them, [the remakes] bring them back to mind because they're not as good. They're just not born of the same



Wrapped Up: *Boris Karloff as The Mummy*

WE TRACE THE LINEAGE OF UNIVERSAL'S MOST FAMOUS MONSTER ALL THE WAY BACK TO GERMANY'S **CASTLE FRANKENSTEIN**

BIRTH *of a* MONSTER

by MOANER T. LAWRENCE

WITHOUT MARY SHELLEY'S 1818 NOVEL, ***FRANKENSTEIN; OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS***, mad scientists, the Universal Monster series, gothic fiction, science fiction and horror as we know it would likely look very different. Similarly, without Castle Frankenstein (a.k.a. Burg Frankenstein, pictured below), located near Darmstadt, Germany, Shelley may have never written her pivotal work of horror.

The castle makes its first appearance in medieval records in 948 AD, dating it at well over a thousand years old. However, its foundations are likely older still, as historian Walter Scheele explains. "The Burgundians, an Eastern Germanic tribe, migrated to the mountain strait of Darmstadt and most likely founded Burg Frankenstein, because at 5000 BC, the mountain ridge was already considered a holy place for pagan rites."

He adds that the word Frankenstein comes from old Germanic, meaning "Free land taken by a noble lord."

But how exactly does a European castle inspire the creation of a man-made monster?

"Johann Konrad Dippel von Frankenstein was the illegitimate son of Anna Eleonora Munchmeyer and Conrad von Frankenstein of Oppenheim," explains Scheele. "He was born August 10, 1673, at Burg Frankenstein. When Dippel was young, he studied alchemy and the hermetic arts at the University of Giessen, as well as anatomy and theology. His class developed the first medical textbook with female bodies, and he assisted in dissections and created drawings of the body parts. He is Mary Shelley's model for Victor Frankenstein."

Dippel's interest in dissection didn't end in the classroom, either. He experimented on dead animals in his spare time and wrote a dissertation titled "Maladies and Remedies of the Life of the Flesh," wherein he claimed that both immortality and demonic exorcism could be achieved by boiling certain animal bones and flesh. He also asserted that the transfer of a soul, from one body to another, could be accomplished by using a funnel. It wasn't long before he gained notoriety among his peers. Dippel's belief that the occult could prevent death provoked several theological confrontations with the Christian community and led to him being banned from Russia and Sweden. He was eventually imprisoned for seven years for heresy.

Upon completing his prison sentence, Dippel returned from Giessen to Burg Frankenstein, broke. According to Scheele, that's when things really got interesting. Dippel was charged with the duty of making gold for the Earl of Darmstadt, but he also continued his search for eternal life, and for that he needed subjects, which weren't easy to come by, or cheap.

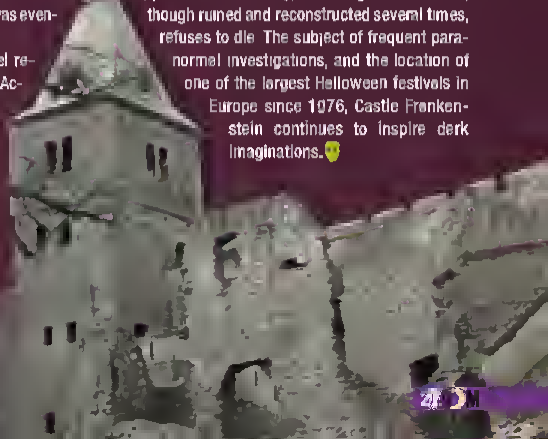
"It was during that time, Dippel took to grave robbery," says Scheele. "[He] stole corpses from the Nieder-Beerbach cemetery next to the castle and dissected them in his laboratory at Burg Frankenstein."

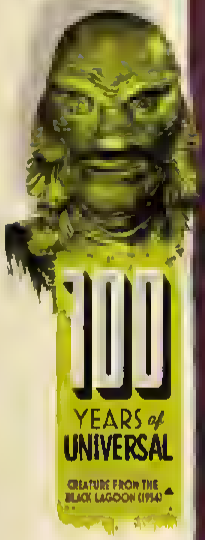
At one point Dippel believed he had stumbled upon the elixir of life, concocted from animal oils. He was so sure of its life-extending powers that he even tried purchasing Castle Frankenstein in exchange for a batch of it, but was dismayed when the offer was rejected. Worse yet, Dippel's night-time activities had not gone unnoticed, and between his newly claimed "discovery," frequent grave robbing and hermitic lifestyle, the Darmstadt villagers came to believe that he had sold his soul to Satan in exchange for the Philosopher's Stone (a stone that could create the elixir of life). Moritz Scriba, a local priest, wanted Dippel out of town so badly he expedited the process by telling the townsfolk that Dippel was using the stolen bodies to build a monster.

Humiliated, Dippel left Burg Frankenstein, but continued his work. A year after claiming he'd found a new potion to keep himself alive until the age of 135, Dippel died on April 25, 1734 at Castle Wittgenstein in Bad Laasphe, Germany. Some thought he suffered a stroke, possibly brought on by his elixir, while others believed that he was attempting to re-enter the church and that Satan dispatched him before he could nullify his pact.

As Scheele explains, his death birthed a legend. "Dippel's scary tale was well known around the castle and, later, became known to German tale collectors Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and in 1813 Jacob Grimm wrote to Mary Jane Clairmont, Mary Shelley's stepmother. That's how Mary Shelley became aware of this tale, and used it in her novel. There can be no doubt that Dippel is Shelley's Victor Frankenstein. Shelley almost exactly describes Dippel's bloody experiments from his time at Giessen."

Today, Dippel and his macabre work have disappeared into history, but Burg Frankenstein, though ruined and reconstructed several times, refuses to die. The subject of frequent paranormal investigations, and the location of one of the largest Halloween festivals in Europe since 1976, Castle Frankenstein continues to inspire dark imaginations.







BEHOLD! FIVE OF THE BEST SEQUELS TO *UNIVERSAL'S* CLASSIC CREATURE FEATURES

More MONSTERS

by PAUL CORUPE



BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935)

James Whale followed up *Frankenstein* with this direct continuation of the story that further develops the sympathetic side of the creature, among several other themes first planted in the original. Having survived the windmill fire, Boris Karloff's monster is back to smash, stalk and, yes, even talk, when Dr Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger) convinces Dr Frankenstein (Colin Clive) to create a female counterpart. Along with the grander set design and striking gothic imagery, there's also a deepened sense of tragedy and compassion here, from the monster's friendship with the blind hermit to his ultimately doomed relationship with his bride (Elsa Lanchester).



THE MUMMY'S HAND (1940)

Forget about Imhotep, this first sequel to *The Mummy* introduced a new undead marauder and a whole mythology to go with him. Professor Andoheb (George Zucco) brews some tana leaf tea to reanimate killer mummy Kharis (Tom Tyler). In order to derail an archaeological expedition on the hunt for the tomb of his ancient lover, Princess Ananka. A more straight-ahead monster movie than its predecessor, this satisfying entry benefits from Tyler's eerie intensity and some post-production magic in which ink scribbles on the actual film emulsion hide Kharis' eyes.



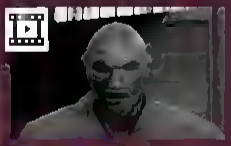
INVISIBLE AGENT (1942)

One of the most unique monster sequels is this late installment of *The Invisible Man* franchise that updated H.G. Wells' tale for WWII. Featuring some of the most inventive effects of the series, this film has a descendent of the original Invisible Man (Jon Hall) parachuting deep into Nazi territory and using the secret serum to prevent an attack on New York City. Featuring notable villainous turns by horror icons Peter Lorre and Sir Cedric Hardwicke, it's a film that effortlessly shifts between horror and many other genres, including fantasy, sci-fi, spy thriller and film noir.



FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN (1943)

A sequel to both *The Wolf Man* and *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, Universal's first monster match-up is mostly a set-up for the titular fight, but it's still an engaging film, as long-suffering Larry Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.) arrives in Europe in search of suicide assistance from Dr Frankenstein. Talbot's palpable desperation drives the film until, during one wolfy transformation, he accidentally awakens the Monster (Bela Lugosi). Screenwriter Curt Siodmak twists and contorts the plot to conform with the continuity established in past entries but it's worth it for the explosive climax, which delivers all the thrills and destruction a monster fan could ask for.



THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US (1956)

Several of Universal's monster movies played off fears and uncertainties over evolution, but none quite so effectively as the third and final installment of the *Black Lagoon* films. The Gill Man is recaptured by scientists who discover he's actually turning more human in front of their eyes, taking to land and even wearing clothes (partially to cover up the now-frayed costume). But the film seems more interested in a torrid romance, as one of the deranged doctors murders a young guide who is dallying with his wife. Framed for the crime, the Gill Man takes justice into his own hands for the final stage of one of the most unique and unusual character arcs for any of the big screen monsters.



LUPITA TOVAR (1910 –)

At 102, Tovar is one of the last surviving performers from Universal's early years. Appearing in the Spanish version of Universal's 1930 thriller *The Cat Creeps* before starring in the Spanish version of *Dracula* (as "Eva Seward"), she gave a more vivacious – some say superior – performance than that of her English counterpart. She retired from acting in the 1940s, but introduced *Dracula* for the 2006 DVD re-release.

convergence of technology, culture and economics that came together in 1931 in a way that I don't think they'll ever come together again. That is the year that the four major icons [hit the big screen], the vampire, the man-made monster, the double-faced monster – Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – and the misshapen monster, the freak from Tod Browning's *Freaks*, which was produced in 1931 and released in 1932. So 1931 was quite a special year, and I don't think we'll see another quite so influential.

Do you think there could be another great monster film or do they only exist in the past?

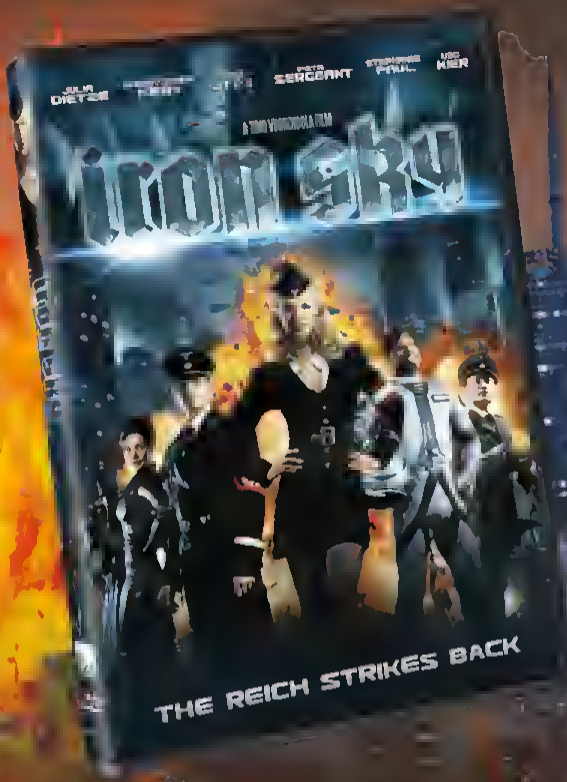
There's nothing really original about those horror icons; they just reached a kind of special critical mass in 1931. They all had their achievements in literature and stage and one of the points in *The Monster Show* is that there's nothing really new about monsters, just how these parts are recombined in novel ways. I think Dr Hannibal Lecter comes close to being one of those lasting iconic characters and he's just parts from human monsters: he's like Dracula, who had a taste for human blood, Frankenstein, a brilliant but mad scientist displayed like a sideshow freak, and like Jekyll and Hyde, he has two personalities – one very charming and one very deadly. And so, all these familiar attributes are brought together in a new way and that's what archetypes are: they don't really change, but they can be reassembled and put to new uses.

Final thoughts on the impact and legacy of Universal horror?

These were extremely creepy images and characters and it's hard to put yourself into the position of having never seen anything like this before, as they are so familiar today. It's like trying to imagine seeing *Psycho* for the first time and not knowing what you were about to experience. So you have to appreciate the film on other levels completely. But our modern experience of these films is very different, and they are certainly coloured with nostalgia and fascination with the studio and trivia. That's what helps keep them alive. The modern taste for classic horror characters is very different from that in 1931, but that's okay. I'll take them any day.

COUNTDOWN 2 DOOMSDAY

NAZIS AND ZOMBIES... HOW WILL YOU FIGHT TO SURVIVE?







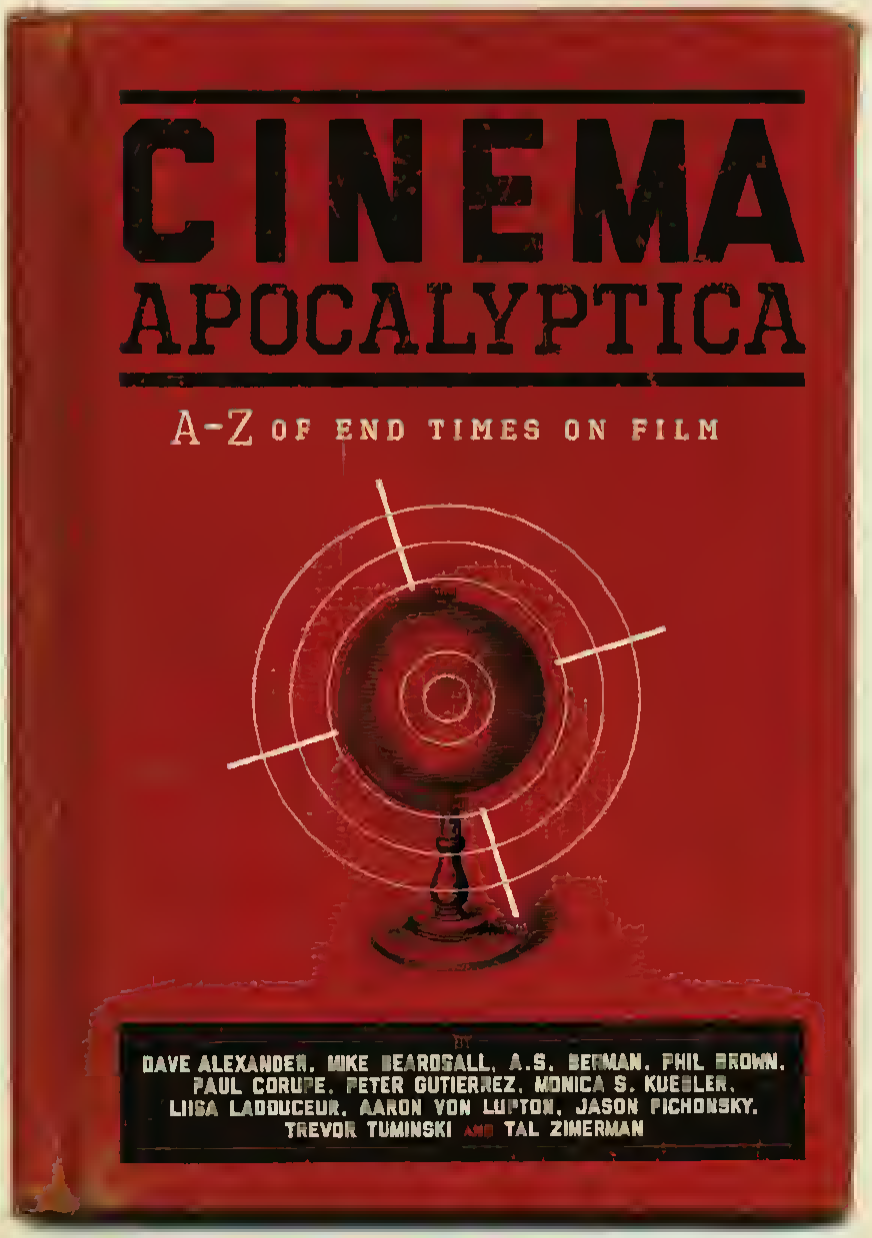
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IF THE MAYANS ARE RIGHT, **2012** IS THE YEAR WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE – **THE ONLY QUESTION IS, HOW?** FOR YEARS FILMMAKERS HAVE SPECULATED ON ALL THE WAYS OUR SPECIES COULD END, AND WE DECIDED TO CATALOGUE 'EM FOR YOUR ARMAGEDDON CONVENIENCE





Doomsday Flock: *(clockwise from top left)* ***The Birds, Kingdom of the Spiders, Contagion,*** *and* ***They Live.***

A ARACHNIDS

(See ***Kingdom of the Spiders, Terentula, Earth vs. the Spider***)

The Horsemen of the Apocalypse may well arrive on eight hairy legs instead of four. Whether mutated to giant proportions or simply part of a swarm of chaos-causing web-spinners, spiders are dangerously resourceful in their murderous methods. Some leave behind vast pools of venom – like the giant mutant of *Tarantula* (1955). Others suck out the vital juices of rock 'n' roll teens, as in *Earth vs. the Spider* (1958). And then there are those that simply envelop your entire body with sticky webbing, as seen in *Kingdom of the Spiders* (1977). Spiders are well armed (ha!), so keep a rolled-up magazine or ten handy. PC

B BIRDS

(See ***Birdemic, The Birds***)

Most people fear bats, but what about our feathered friends? Those beaks are made for eye-gouging; get on their bad side and they bring death from above. That's the wacky theory that Alfred Hitchcock turned into *The Birds* (1963). Hitch could laugh at murder, but birds terrified him so deeply that he envisioned them turning on humanity. Other than the unfortunate TV sequel *The Birds 2: Land's End* (1994), no one explored another birdy bye-bye until James Nguyen made *Birdemic: Shock and Terror* (2010). It's easily one of the worst movies ever produced, yet somehow there's a sequel in production, which could be another sign that the end is near. PB

C CONTAGION

(See ***Contagion, Doomsday, [REC], The Stand, 28 Days Later***)

One thing the horror genre can teach us is that government-designed weaponized viruses will never work as intended. Case in point: Stephen King's 1978 epic end-of-the-world saga *The Stand*, later made into a TV miniseries (1994). In it, a ragtag group of survivors have visions of either a kindly old woman named Mother Abagail or a sinister man named Randall Flagg, then travel to join one camp or the other, leading to a Las Vegas showdown. A less supernatural version of the virus-run-amok story came in last year's *Contagion*, which realistically showed the impact of a mysterious new disease on social order, and the race to locate a vaccine. Though the virus is suspected to be a military weapon, the final reveal shows how it came to be through a deadly cocktail of infected bat, pig and human. If no one ever finds a cure, though, one way to deal with a nasty pandemic is to quarantine the infected wholesale. In Neil Marshall's *Doomsday* (2008), the so-called Reaper virus tears a swath across Scotland, so the British government walls the country right up and waits for everyone to die (um, how long would that little project take and what would stop people from leaving while it is being built?). Unfortunately, the plan doesn't go quite as planned and Reaper shows up decades later in London. Before you can say *Escape from New York*, the government forms an elite team led by a female commando with a cybernetic eye to enter Scotland in search of the antidote. A more likely scenario would be Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), in which the primate-borne Rage virus is released from a lab and decimates England in a matter of weeks, causing the infected to tear apart and/or infect anyone who gets close. (The 2007 sequel *28 Weeks Later* sees a follow-up breakout.) The smaller-scale version of this scenario is *[REC]* (2007), which sees the government seal off an apartment building to keep a similar animal-borne Rage-y sickness in check. The sequels reveal a more sinister genesis of the illness. The lesson: live like a hermit and don't mess with animals. AVL

D DOPPELGANGERS

(See ***Body Snatchers, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Invasion, The Thing, They Live***)

Perhaps the most insidious aliens are those who disguise themselves as humans in an attempt to subvert society and destroy us from within. The brainwashing creatures of *They Live* (1988), the pod people duplicates in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) – not to mention the fantastic '78 remake, Abel Ferrara's underrated *Bodysnatchers* (1993) and the much maligned sort-of remake *The Invasion* from '07 – or the shape-shifting alien of *The Thing* (1982) make it hard to tell the difference between friend and foe. These films play off fears of life as we know it being snuffed out, and the terror of being powerless in the face of a threat that we don't – and maybe even can't – understand. Send in the clones... never mind, they're already here. PC

ELVIS HAS LEFT THE PLANET

ATOMIC BRAIN INVASION DVD

Starring David Lavallee Jr., Sarah Nicklin and Michael Reed
Directed by Richard Griffin
Written by Guy Benoit and Richard Griffin
Scorpio Film Releasing

If you've seen one parody of 1950s sci-fi/horror, you've seen 'em all, right? From dollar store special effects, to a cast of people who look like (and probably are) cousins, low-budget films of this sort don't often resonate very far beyond the circles that spawned them. But 2010's *Atomic Brain Invasion*, despite being cornier than a bowl of Fritos, is happy to have fun with or without you.

In this goofy, satire-laden atomic scare flick, not one but two alien races descend on Earth with the purpose of meeting its most revered inhabitant, Elvis Aaron Presley. On the bad team, there's a gooey life form able to penetrate the skulls of humans until their faces melt off, leaving nothing but a brain and googly eyes. Their goal is to exchange their advanced weaponry for The King and learn from his secrets, as they have been doing with celebrities since the early 20th century. Fighting alongside the humans is an interstellar group of cheerleaders who just want to meet Elvis. Our earthlings, appearing here in the various garden-variety stereotypes (the nerds, greasers and an over-the-top army general), are enjoyably brought to life by the enthusiastic cast.



Not all the comedy sticks, but when it does – as in the drive-in scene involving a moronic exchange between a cop and a scientist – it's laugh-out-loud funny. Chris Russell and Alan August's creature effects are more '80s than '50s but, of course, that's a good thing, the more jiggling latex and slimy purple barf, the better. There's even a bullying subplot that, during one moment, becomes deeply sincere without totally derailing the ongoing irreverence. He may not have had much of a budget, but to pull that off, director Richard Griffin shows he has a great feel for his characters and respect for his cast.

It's obvious that everyone behind *Atomic Brain Invasion* not only loves cheesy genre movies, they love making them as well. If the impending alien apocalypse is half as much fun as this, prepare yourselves for a hell of a good time.

TAL ZIMERMAN



Dead Reckoning: *(clockwise from top)* ***Reign of Fire****, "The Screwfly Solution," and* ***Bad Taste***

E
EXTRATERRESTRIALS

(See ***Atomic Brain Invaders, Bad Taste, Lifeforce, Mars Attacks!, War of the Worlds***)

Not all alien life forms come to Earth to eat candy and levitate bicycles. Hailing from halfway across the galaxy, most alien invaders aim to colonize or destroy the planet without provocation, such as the army of alien tripods that leave behind a trail of fiery destruction in *War of the Worlds* (1953, and the 2005 Steven Spielberg remake), or in *Mars Attacks!* (1996), which depicts an invasion by laser gun-equipped little green men who raze national monuments as they continue to protest that they "come in peace." Or, in one case, they're willing to literally melt our faces off in order to meet Elvis (2010's *Atomic Brain Invasion*, see sidebar). One of the most persistent fears is that E.T.s are out looking for new, human-shaped food sources, including the gruesome fast-food devotees in *Bad Taste* (1987) or the space vampires out for a pint of local blood in *Lifeforce* (1985). "To serve man" indeed. PC

F
FIREBREATHERS

(See ***Reign of Fire***)

You didn't see this one coming. In 2002's *Reign of Fire*, the world is reduced to ash after a mining operation in England uncovers a hibernating beast, which then hatches eggs and unleashes legions of flying dragons. Yep, dragons. Spewing massive jets of flesh-melting fire, the winged hellions roast everything and everyone in their paths. Enter a raggedy band of survivors led by Christian Bale, who have been holed up in a castle for years, and a Yankee army battalion headed up by Matthew McConaughey. Literal fireworks abound in this surprisingly tense, occasionally terrifying Hollywood creature feature. DA

G
GENDER

(See ***Children of Men, "The Screwfly Solution"***)

Must the end of the world result from cataclysmic disasters – or can it simply come from the gradual failure of something that we take for granted – the ability to procreate? *Children of Men* (2007) posits a dystopian future caused by years of unexplained infertility among the planet's women. This changes when a young refugee is revealed to be miraculously pregnant; the hero eventually escorts her to safety, which lends a hopeful note to the otherwise bleak proceedings. "The Screwfly Solution" (2006), a Joe Dante-directed episode of *Masters of Horror*, takes a similar approach but ratchets up the pulp factor. A quickly spreading plague threatens womankind, and thus humanity's prospects, by turning men into femicidal maniacs. A deceptively thoughtful exploration of unchecked misogyny, the story literalizes the battle of the sexes by turning it into a visceral and one-sided massacre. PG

H
HELLSPAWN

(See ***The Omen series, Rosemary's Baby***)

The Antichrist, the child of Satan is described in the Book of Revelation as the one who will lead

mankind to its ultimate demise. The most likely culprit turned out to be young Damien Thorn from 1976's *The Omen*, a child born to human parents who also happens to be the offspring of the Devil. He corrupts and destroys those around him simply by existing, and over the course of three films, tried to carry out his true father's sinister mission before being stabbed to death in *Omen III: The Final Conflict* (1981). The horned one's deadly destiny may have not ended there, however. Remember, we never did find out what happened once Damien's twin sister Delia took over the family business in *Omen IV: The Awakening* (1991), and whatever became of the titular demon seed of *Rosemary's Baby*, I wonder? Heaven help us. MB

I
INSECTS

(See ***Beginning of the End, Bug, Damnation Alley, The Deadly Mantis, Empire of the Ants, Phase IV, The Swarm, Them!***)

Ever since a nasty biblical plague of locusts rained down on Egypt, humankind has been terrified of being overpowered by these resilient pests. It's bad enough that we had to fight off the giant marauding mutant ants of *Them!* (1954) and *Empire of the Ants* (1977), the grasshoppers of *Beginning of the End* (1957) or even the titular menace of *The Deadly Mantis* (1957), but even more wornsome are those unstoppable waves of normal-size bugs on the attack. Michael Caine does battle with millions of killer bees in *The Swarm* (1978), while scientists are worried they'll be outsmarted by a colony of super-intelligent ants in *Phase IV* (1974). But in ultimate ickiness it's hard to top those nasty, seemingly indestructible cockroaches, whether they're a crunchy carpet of fire-starting killers in *Bug* (1975) or a parade of flesh-stripping post-apocalyptic roaches in *Damnation Alley* (1977), these insects won't hesitate to get both creepy and crawly all over you. PC





Forces Of Evil: *(top to bottom)* ***The Reaping, Them!, Hardware,*** *and (inset)* ***The Omen***

J
JESUS

(See ***Believers, End of Days, Legion, The Reaping, The Seventh Sign***)

If the Bible is legit, one day Jesus is gonna announce last call and there won't be many ways to dodge his wrath. Joining a cult proved a wise idea in 2007's *Believers*. Then again, God might send an army of angels to wipe us out more directly, if the end turns out like *Legion* (2009), in which the big guy could barely raise his attack above the customers in a desert diner (we'll probably be alright). Familiarity with God's perennial best-seller was the saving grace for Demi Moore in *The Seventh Sign* (1988) though it wasn't all that helpful to Hilary Swank, going through the endurance test of the ten biblical plagues in *The Reaping* (2007). I guess there's always Arnold Schwarzenegger to save us, as he did in 1999's *End of Days* – much like a certain someone on a cross back in the day, come to think of it (only with an Austrian accent and more one-liners). PB

K
KILLBOTS

(See ***Future-Kill, Gyo, Hardware, The Terminator*** series)

They'll never listen, ambitious buggers that they are, but computer scientists and engineers could do the world a favour if they paid attention to the *Terminator* franchise before they go gettin' all sophisticated with their artificial intelligence. In the series, a US strategic defense computer system called Skynet is so smart that it becomes self-aware, and apparently evil, turning on the human race with the ultimate goal of genocide. Skynet's most popular weapons are the terminators: badass robots that look and speak just like humans, are impervious to gunfire, and according to *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), can run for 120 years on their existing power cells. Just killing one is darn near impossible, but an entire army? Yeesh, good luck with that, humanity. In *Hardware* (1990), a killer cyborg stalks a post-apocalyptic slum. The 'borg in question is a product of the government itself, which wishes to commit mass genocide. Named M A R K 13 in reference to Mark 13:20, a Bible passage containing the phrase "no flesh shall be spared," this cyborg is self-aware, can repair itself and is particularly sadistic in its quest to kill, sometimes injecting victims with cytotoxins. An honourable mention also goes to Splatter from *Future-Kill* (1985), the famously awful punk rock mash-up of *Mad Max*, *The Warriors* and *Animal House*. Splatter's exact specifications aren't clear but it's psychotic, possibly cybernetic, and something's up with its dick. Even weirder are the robotic fish in the animated feature *Gyo: Tokyo Fish Attack* (2012), based on the manga of the same name, which crawl out from the ocean on mechanical legs to wreak havoc. Though they've seldom been the most direct way to bring on the Apocalypse, killbots dish out a lickin' and keep on tickin'. AVL

L
LANGUAGE

(See ***Pontypool***)

"The word is now a virus," wrote William S. Burroughs back in 1962. Tony Burgess' 1998 novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* and its 2008 film adaptation *Pontypool* took that fairly abstract thought to a terrifying conclusion: an outbreak of zombies feeding on language. When a small-town radio announcer and his crew get reports of citizens shambling around slurring their words then turning on

NUKES

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

THE PEOPLE WHO OWN THE DARK (1975) DVD

Starring Alberto de Mendoza, Maria Perschy and Paul Naschy
Directed by León Klimovsky
Written by Vicente Naranda
Code Red

In one of the sidebars to the *Rituals* (1976) cover story in *RM#96*, the Rue Crew compiled a list of films we'd like to see on DVD – and it looks as it my wish has come true!

The People Who Own the Dark, retitled for the US from the Spanish *Ultimo deseo*, is a grim apocalyptic science fiction/horror hybrid helmed by prolific Argentinian director León Klimovsky, best known for the four films he made starring Spanish horror legend Paul Naschy (who appears here in a supporting role as a ruthless survivalist). The script cobbles together elements from *Invasion of the Triffids* (1962), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *The Omega Man* (1971).

A group of wealthy businessman and high-ranking government officials gather in the bowels of a crumbling castle for a weekend of alcohol and drug-fuelled debauchery inspired by the Marquis de Sade. Their decadance is interrupted by a nuclear attack. When the men go to the village for supplies, they discover that the locals were blinded by a blast. The townsfolk soon form a mob, led by a sinister blind beggar, and mount an assault on the sighted survivors holed up in the castle.

However derivative it may be, this is an obscure gem of '70s Eurohorror. The story is tightly plotted and relentlessly downbeat, the locations superb, and the performances from the all-star cast of veteran genre actors compelling.



There are two versions of the film on this disc: the anamorphic "Grindhouse Version" – sourced from a damaged film print missing three minutes (mostly from the credit sequence and opening scenes) and boasting strong colours and minimal scratches and emulsion marks – and the full-frame "Portable Grindhouse Version," a transfer of a 1" VHS tape that is the same as the Sun Video release from the early '80s. A trailer, and trailers for other Code Red releases, are the only extras but considering this is the film's first time on DVD and that it's limited to a pressing of 400, it's sure to be a collector's item all the same.

THE GORE MET



The End is Nigh: (from top) The Crazies remake, Pontypool and Threads

each other in bloody, chaotic riots, they become quarantined in the studio trying to figure out (with minimal words) just how to stop an infection spread by speech. We've long known from films such as *The Mummy* and *The Evil Dead* that words have the power to unleash curses and other nastiness, but in this age of killer pathogens and bacterial mutations, if you wanna survive, hold your tongue. LL

M

MILITARY

(See *The Crazies, The Mist, Return of the Living Dead*)

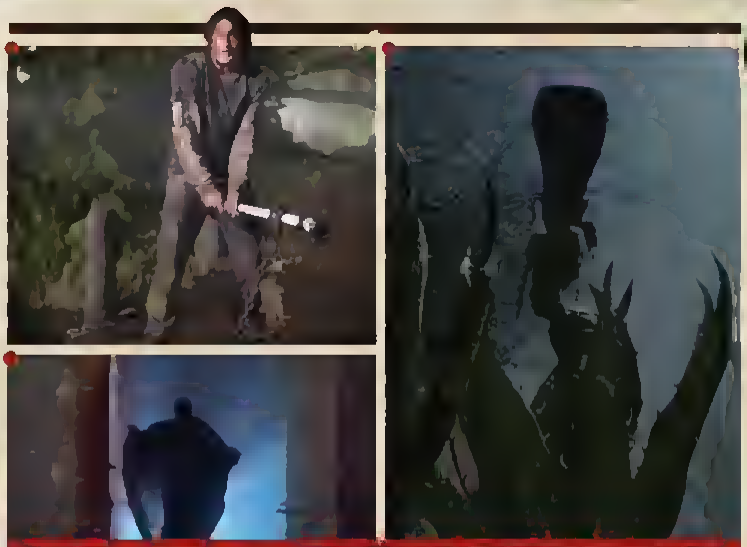
Not content with destroying all life with a good ol'-fashioned war, the military has always had a knack for experimenting with things that are destined to go wrong. Consider a brilliant idea such as developing a toxic chemical, spilling it into a town's water supply, and then being forced to round up and exterminate the now homicidal townsfolk, as 1973's *The Crazies* (and the 2010 remake). Or how about misplacing a number of barrels containing noxious corpses and poisonous gas capable of reanimating the dead, as in *Return of the Living Dead* (1985)? The mysterious barrels end up in a medical supply warehouse, where two thick-headed employees open 'em, putting the brains of everyone around at risk. However, nothing beats opening a doorway to another dimension (you know, for science), as in 2007's *The Mist*. The resulting army of Lovecraftian horrors that bursts forth shows the terrified denizens of a small New England town just where their tax dollars are going. MB

N

NUKES

(See *The Day After, The Divide, A Guide to Armageddon, The People Who Own the Dark, Threads*)

For its ability to cause the most destruction in the shortest amount of time, you just can't beat a nuclear bomb. Everything leading up to it makes for great drama, and everything after proves the perfect setting for action-fantasy films. But it's the moment of impact that's 100 percent pure horror. In a matter of seconds, everything within range of a detonation is incinerated. The blast irradiates the surrounding region, blanketing the landscape with a haze of debris and dust. Life, hope and everything else goes up in flames as survivors die in the streets, scramble for supplies or wait in fallout shelters, not knowing the full extent of the horrors that await them outside. Like the best of the nuke attack movies, 1982's *A Guide to Armageddon* was made for television. In this British mock doc, a narrator guides the audience through a list of effects of an atomic bomb on a major city, with still and moving images of enormous structures exploding and collapsing, radiation-burned victims, and entire blocks engulfed in flames. American network ABC's *The Day After* (1983) offers a terrifying nuclear bomb scenario, while 2011 feature *The Divide* focused the horror on a bunker full of mentally eroding survivors. The most soul-crushing of them all, though, is the BBC's *Threads* (1984), which filters narrative fiction through a documentary lens. The first half of the 110-minute runtime shows life in Sheffield, England, as drab and dull. It's a working-class steel town, and we're given just enough back story on a few characters when a flash of white light vapourizes nearly everything in the streets. The film's remaining content is a graphic hour-long montage comprised of burning bodies, twisted metal, overflowing hospitals, screaming babies torched in their carriages, the list goes on. And



Green Hell: (clockwise from top) The Cabin In The Woods, 2009's The Day of the Triffids, and Prince of Darkness.

even if you survive the initial blast, chances are other, often disfigured, survivors out to get you, as in *The People Who Own the Dark* (see sidebar). Nothing signals Hell on Earth like a mushroom cloud TZ

O

OLD ONES

(See *The Cabin in the Woods*)

Even in genre properties, apocalypses are often narrowly avoided due to the enterprising actions of a few heroes or heroines, unless of course you are talking about a Joss Whedon project. Sunnydale was reduced to a crater at the end of TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*'s cast of characters were forced to face giants, demons and dragons in its apocalyptic finale, so it shouldn't surprise anyone that *The Cabin in the Woods* (2012) would offer up an even more grandiose end-of-the-world scenario for the big screen. It marked perhaps the first and only time in cinematic history that the old gods have risen from the deep to literally tear our planet to pieces MSK

P

PLANTS

(See *The Day of the Triffids, The Happening, No Blade of Grass*)

Face it, without plants humanity would be lost. They provide us with the oxygen we breathe, nourish the vegans among us and feed the herbivores (that the rest of us carnivores routinely chow down on). But what if plant life could fight back. It does in John Wyndham's 1951 novel *The Day of The Triffids* and its subsequent film and TV adaptations (including 1962's *Invasion of the Triffids*), hobbling along on tripod limbs and paralyzing the human population with whip-like stingers, just long enough to consume them. Or perhaps the vengeful plants would stay true to their, er, roots, instead emitting a neurotoxin that causes mass suicide as in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Happening* (2008). Even more frightening, and much more plausible, is the scenario set forth in *No Blade of Grass* (1970), in which pollution leads to a virus that kills all forms of grass life, leading to mass starvation and anarchy JP

Q

QUANTUM MECHANICS

(See *Prince of Darkness*)

They say "the devil is in the details" and, in this case, evil exists at the sub-atomic level, as anti-matter. Although the Catholic Church has managed to contain Satan, all it takes to release him and his father, the anti-God, is a few miscalculations by a handful of college physicists. John Carpenter dreamed up this sci-fi horror scenario and called it *Prince of Darkness* (1987), drawing upon quantum physics and the science fiction tales of Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* series for inspiration JP

R

RODENTS

(See *Mulberry St., Night of the Lepus, Rats: Night of Terror*)

They're filthy, bitey and multiply like crazy, so just imagine if there were tens, maybe hundreds, of thousands of them trying to eat you and everyone else. That's the scenario in 1984's *Rats: Night of Terror*, when post-apocalyptic biker-gangs are besieged by a legion of rodents trying to finish off humanity. Even worse, the zombie-like plague of killer rat mutants terrorizing New York in *Mulberry St.* (2006). Bigger, and just as anxious to feast on your guts, though, are the super-sized, rapidly multiplying rabbits – that's right, bunnies – ripping apart a desert town in *Night of the Lepus* (1972). Nature made 'em cuddly, but science made them monsters! DA

WORLD WIDE DEAD

THE APPARITION (2002)

Starring Ashley Greene, Sebastian Stan and Tom Felton
Written and directed by Todd Lincoln
Warner Bros.

"Once you believe, you die" reads the tagline to the new supernatural thriller, *The Apparition*. Let me tell you: if that were true this film would be a damn sight shorter, and even at a runtime of only 82 minutes, it's a welcome thought.

The Apparition sees a bunch of college kids unleash an entity from another realm that begins to haunt them. It's painstakingly boring for the first 30 minutes, presumably a way of teasing the audience, as we shift from an opening séance scene featuring a ton of retro ghost-hunting kits to main characters Kelly (Ashley Greene) and Ben (Sebastian Stan) moving into their new house. The couple begins to experience weird goings-on such as doors opening and clothes being thrown around, as we (very slowly) begin to piece together what's happening. The entity from the other realm feeds off fear and becomes stronger with each person it devours. The idea that it possesses the potential to become a worldwide catastrophe lends itself to an impending sense of global chaos, but even a bleak, apocalyptic undercurrent can't give this film any impact.

A combination of stale dialogue, poor acting and no atmosphere means whatever doom-and-gloom is going to happen to Kelly and Ben is rendered meaningless. In addition, if you want a scene to have some genuinely creepy moments, don't have the lead parade around in her underwear for five minutes no matter how lovely her bum is, as it's guaranteed that by that time the audience's thoughts are elsewhere.



A film like this relies on dread to become claustrophobic, but there's no depth or genuine connection to anyone on screen ever established. There's also a lot of mumbo-jumbo spouted by various characters in an attempt to explain what's happening, but it's embarrassingly clear this is filler in what is a straight-up ridiculous concept and plot.

CHARLOTTE STEAR









Bringers Of Death: *(from top)* ***Night of the Lepus, Vanishing on 7th Street, Maximum Overdrive*** *and* ***The Road***

S

SHADOWS

(See ***Vanishing on 7th Street***)

As if Detroit doesn't have enough problems, in *Vanishing on 7th Street* (2010) the city suffers a huge power outage that causes all but a handful of survivors simply to vanish. The bewildered leftovers soon realize that the days are rapidly getting shorter, and the shadows are literally out to get them, creeping up walls and down streets. You're there one moment and gone the next, with only a pile of your clothes left behind – an apocalyptic image that's creepy as all hell. Point for originality, but bad computer animation and some serious plot logic kept this Brad Anderson (*Session 9*, *The Machinist*) film out of the spotlight, har har. DA

T

TECHNOLOGY

(See ***The Apparition, Maximum Overdrive, One Missed Call, Pulse, Suicide Club, Ringu***)

Just as the Japanese are always the first to enjoy the latest technological breakthroughs, the films from the region are usually first to reveal how those gadgets are gonna bite us all in the ass. While *Pulse* (2001, forget the crappy 2006 American remake) depicted the internet as a gateway to an afterlife where the deceased induce the living to join them one by one, *The Apparition* – a North American example (see sidebar) – has a deadly virus-like supernatural entity brought into our world via some ghost gadgetry, and *Suicide Club* (2001) presented death by a prepubescent J-pop band that uses cellphones and some fiendishly catchy music videos to drive the population to *seppuku*. Takashi Miike brought us text messages from beyond the grave in *One Missed Call* (2003), and who could forget the droopy-eyed VCR-wraith Sadako, who scared the bejesus out of us with her dramatic *Purple Rose of Cairo* moment in *Ringu* (1998)? On this continent, machines have been looking shifty for years. Take Stephen King's long-groused-about *Maximum Overdrive* (1986), which sees tractor trailers, wheeled machine guns and vending machines hold a truck stop hostage after being brought to life shortly after Earth passes through the tail of a comet. Only plucky Emilio Estevez and the complete collapse of the full-service gas station in America prevented the machines from taking over completely. Saved by self-serve. AB

U

UNKNOWN

(See ***The Road***)

Sometimes the off-screen terrors scare us most, for our ability to imagine evil is greater than anything writers can conjure. This is what makes Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic father-son survival story *The Road* so completely unsettling (more so even than scenes of cannibalism or suicide): the author refuses to tell us just how the world came to its end. Fans of the book (2006) and the film (2009) have tried to unravel the clues from the ashes that have blanketed his world and wiped out all plant and animal life. Was it an asteroid? Nuclear winter? World War whatever? Magnetic pole reversal? Volcanic explosions? If you want to really freak yourself out about all the ways our civilization may soon be lights out, go read these discussions. Or better yet, don't. When it comes to annihilation, there are some things you just don't want to know. LL

V

VAMPIRES

(See ***Daybreakers, The Last Man on Earth, The Omega Man, Stake Land***)

Vampires may stalk the shadows, persuading weak-willed humans to part with both their clothes and lifeblood, but that doesn't mean that more ambi-







End Timers: *(clockwise from top)* ***Daybreakers, Sunshine,*** *and* ***Splinter***

tious, world-domination-minded members of their ilk don't exist. The vampire-zombie hybrids of Richard Matheson's 1954 novel *I Am Legend* (adapted cinematically as *The Last Man on Earth* in 1964, *The Omega Man* in 1971 and the Will Smith film of the same name in 2007) form a new society, following a global infection pandemic, that turns us into them, all while hunting the remaining humans just as the infected were once hunted. Similarly, *Stake Land* (2010) posits another vampire pandemic that has ravished the whole of the US, turning it into a dangerous tribal wasteland, though somehow the humans still manage to prove themselves to be the scariest monsters of all. Not so in *Daybreakers* (2009), where society has evolved, rather than crumbled, following the vampire plague, putting the bloodsuckers in positions of power. Shots of blood added to morning commuters' coffees and the massive industrialized corporate blood farms provide suitably chilling imagery of a world where the monsters are in danger of draining us into extinction, potentially sealing their fate right along with ours. MSK

W

WEATHER

(See ***2012, The Day After Tomorrow, Hell, Sunshine***)

Considering horror movies often reflect the presiding paranoia of the day, it's no surprise that the film industry would mine this generation's world-is-flat/world-is-round stalemate – climate change – for chills and thrills. In *Sunshine* (2007), director Danny Boyle shoots a keep of astronomartyrs into space to re-light the dying sun with an explosive payload – their mission is nearly derailed by a monstrously sunburnt predecessor. Old Mr Sun roasts the not-too-distant future in *Hell* (see sidebar). And while Roland Emmerich's CG eye to a new ice age in *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and the solar flare nightmare *2012* (2009) may be as empty-headed as the popcorn jockey at the multiplex, his bleakbusters never fail to blow up at the box office. TT

X

XENOPHOBIA

(See ***The Blob, The Signal, Splinter***)

The ubiquity of the paranoid-about-outsiders theme becomes clear once one recalls that "alien" also means "foreign." Indeed, films as disparate as *The Blob* (1958, 1988) and *Splinter* (2008) all represent nightmarish versions of "assimilation." 2007's *The Signal* – in which an id-freeing radio/TV transmission upends society –

EPIC BURN

HELL DVD

Starring Hannah Herzsprung, Stipe Erceg and Lars Eidinger
Directed by Tim Fehlbaum
Written by Tim Fehlbaum, Olive Kahl and Thomas Wöbke
Mongrel Media

Pass the SPF 1000, will ya? You'll need it for the apocalyptic wasteland presented in the German film *Hell*, a world where a solar event causes a swift and devastating climate change. More specifically, everything has dried up, vegetation is dead, animal corpses litter the landscape and even a few minutes in the sun can cause severe burns.

Navigating this dusty, sun-scorched landscape in a beat-up Volvo are a man, his lover and her younger sister, in search of enough gas, food and water to make it to France. They stop at a gas station, where they get in a confrontation with a man who eventually joins them after proving that he's got the mechanical chops to keep their beleaguered ride running. The uneasy alliance is tested when they drive into a trap and some of them are captured by cannibals.

Director/co-writer Tim Fehlbaum does a bang-up job of telling a big tale with a tiny budget, relying on an overexposed look to turn the daytime into a blinding oven, and small, desperate moments to convey a larger sense of hopelessness. Watching the film's believably ragged characters drain a radiator for drinking water, or barter over a can of peaches, is nearly as unnerving as seeing them captured as human cattle. *Hell* is very much a companion film to *The Road* in terms of sheer desperation.



At least it was in its intended form. The distributor made the fatal error of relegating this punchy Apocalypse film to a bare-bones dubbed release. Yes, dubbed. No one but the most slack-jawed, mouth-breathing Walmart toad wants to watch anything dubbed that isn't a kung-fu movie. (Even the average consumer overcame the pants-shitting terror of widescreen movies – we can do this!) Yet, here we are in 2012 with no subtitle option for a European film. Forget global warming, apparently reading is the real enemy.

DAVE ALEXANDER

END OF THE WORLD PARTY

RESIDENT EVIL: RETRIBUTION

Starring Milla Jovovich, Sienna Guillory and Michelle Rodriguez
Written and directed by Paul W.S. Anderson
Alliance



With five entries in their apocalyptic franchise, Paul W.S. Anderson and his wife Milla Jovovich's *Resident Evil* flicks could outnumber the video games soon. *Retribution* opens with a ten-minute prologue attempting to explain the storyline thus far, but the recap is as hard to follow as the four movies that preceded it. Essentially, after Alice (Jovovich) and her chums broke into the Umbrella Corporation's supercomputer, the zombie floodgates were opened. Now she's one of humanity's last survivors, still struggling to find out what happened. But she has learned that Umbrella is, like, super evil and she's really good at killing zombies.

The truth is that the convoluted narrative actually makes it an accurate adaptation of the games. Capcom's mythology can often be impossible for players to sort out, but every game has a strong enough zombie-killing through line that you can just pick up 'n' play. That's true of *Retribution* too, which often feels like watching someone else play a *RE* game. Alice is dropped into a secret facility that Umbrella used to test its zombie virus. The company built replica cityscapes for Moscow, New York and Tokyo to stage test attacks and sent footage to all the world superpowers. Then every country bought its own virus for biological warfare and launched it on its enemy. Alice needs to battle her way through each city to escape (like levels in a game) while a pesky supercomputer sends down bad guys to fight her.

It's all pretty silly, but also about as entertaining as this series gets, the "plot" allows Alice to jump-kick and machine gun her way through armies of the undead every few minutes. Those creaky narrative mechanics mean that she just happens to find a leather catsuit to wear and a little girl to protect, but if you shut down your brain and laugh along, it's hard to have a bad time. Fan-favourite game characters such as Jill Valentine and Weskler return, as does actress Michelle Rodriguez as Rain, giving *Retribution* a reunion party atmosphere – except with hordes of zombies getting mown down.

PHIL BROWN

makes xenophobia hit closer to home as there are no outsiders per se – *every* neighbour can be an ally, or a threat, or both. Sure, we need each other to survive, but we're also wise to answer ringing doorbells with a blunt object in hand. PG

Y

YOUTH

(See *The Children*, *Village of the Damned*)

Death by hugging? That's the central image in the beloved 1980 grindhouse flick *The Children*, and it also sums up its main psychological conceit: our very instinct to comfort, protect and cherish young 'uns is inverted – with fatal results. A release that combines two quintessentially '70s themes – environmental catastrophe and monstrous kids – *The Children* focuses upon a toxic gas that is infecting school bus passengers (but not their adult caretakers) and turning them into smiling, black-nailed, electroshocking zombies. As in *Village of the Damned* (both the 1960 and 1995 versions), its imagery leverages the uncanny creepiness of humankind's next generation to make us question our future. Then there's the other version of *The Children* (2008), in which we see kids in the snow-covered countryside get sick and turn downright murderous. Rugrats indeed. PG

Z

ZOMBIES

(See Romero's *...of the Dead* films, *Resident Evil*, *Shaun of the Dead*, *White Zombie*, *Zombieland* and many, many more.)

Whatever the reason for their return – be it chemicals, viruses or simply bad karma – zombies have risen from the grave to kill, consume and convert everyone within reach of their grasp for decades. Out of control and bent on destruction, traditional voodoo zombies eventually added cannibalism to their modus operandi, and started a full-scale revolution. In *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the flesh-eaters' brutality is so aggressive that even the humans begin to turn on each other. By 1978, *Dawn of the Dead* offered a slight glimmer of hope that cleverness and luck could help the resilient stand a fighting chance, but the dead were hungrier and more vicious than ever, and it was the humans who would retreat underground for *Day of the Dead* (1985). In the following decade, the zombie epidemic would be contained for a number of years, only to reignite post-millennium, with a comeback that hasn't yet slowed. And when the hordes mobilized to take us down a notch this time, they did so in top gear. The corporate science-borne mutant zombies of the *Resident Evil* franchise (2002 – present, see sidebar) have proven particularly resilient after being spun off from the video game world. Given their popularity, it's no surprise the shufflers developed a sense of humour, as in *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Zombieland* (2009), which shows us an undead apocalypse that's both funny and freaky. Currently the zombie is most comfortable on the small screen, where *The Walking Dead* has restored the zeds to slow, maggot-ridden glory. Zombies have been through numerous changes, but one truth has always remained: there is no better movie monster that holds a mirror to humanity to show us our faults. They are and always will be *us*. TZ





End Of The Ages: Dawn of the Dead, and (inset) Village of the Damned

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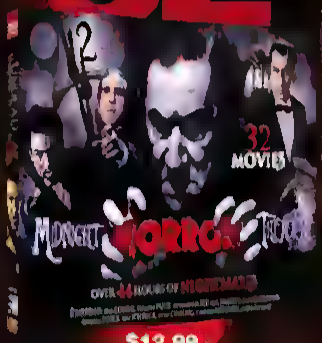
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Upon release, fans of the franchise hated it for its lack of Michael Myers, but 30 years later HALLOWEEN III stands on its own. Director TOMMY LEE WALLACE explains why

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE WARY

by MICHAEL DOYLE

FOR YEARS AFTER ITS RELEASE IN OCTOBER OF 1982, *HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH* was dismissed as "the one without Michael Myers." Garnering dismal notices from critics (although Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* did grudgingly praise its ghoulish style and verve), this inventive shocker only succeeded in provoking furious condemnation from *Halloween* diehards who took umbrage with the fact that the second sequel to John Carpenter's imperious 1978 classic refused to play by the rules. Those expecting the third installment to continue chronicling the relentless marauding of their favourite maniac were instead confronted with mysticism, monoliths and malevolent rubber masks that shed bugs, snakes and other assorted nasties.

If the prospect of creating a sequel to one of the most successful and influential horror films ever made wasn't daunting enough, making one that jettisoned iconic characters, familiar plot devices and generally bore no relation to earlier entries in the series (other than setting the events on Halloween night) was viewed as being tantamount to sacrilege by some fans. Their antipathy was strongly reflected in *Halloween III*'s disappointing box office receipts.

For his part, Carpenter was always intent on steering away from the staid slasher formula he himself had established so brilliantly four years earlier. Ably assisted by co-producer Debra Hill, he had envisioned a series of Halloween-themed sequels that boasted original storylines effused with the spirit and flavour of All Hallow's Eve.

Selecting close friend and protégé Tommy Lee Wallace to direct, Carpenter and Hill assembled an impressive talent pool for the film, which also included cinematographer Dean Cundey (*Halloween*, *The Thing*) and FX veteran Tom Burman (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Cat People*). But most exciting of all was the announcement that the screenplay was to be written by the legendary Nigel Kneale, one of Carpenter's idols and the unqualified genius behind *Quatermass and the Pit* and *The Stone Tape* (the latter almost certainly the most terrifying hour-and-a-half ever broadcast on British television). However, soon after delivering his draft, Kneale grew disgruntled at Carpenter's suggestions and requests for a rewrite, and he left the project acrimoniously.

Wallace was then quickly commissioned to rework the script – much to Kneale's disgust.

The revised narrative concerned alcoholic divorcee Dr Daniel Challis (Tom Atkins of *The Fog* and *Night of the Creeps*) who is left troubled by the brutal murder/suicide of one of his patients, toy salesman Harry Grimbridge (Al Berry, who would go on to endure further ocular trauma as the ill-fated Dr Gruber in *Re-Animator*). Challis teams up with Grimbridge's grieving daughter, Ellie (Stacey Nelkis), to investigate her father's slaying. The trail leads them to Santa Mira, a small Irish community in California and the home of the Silver Shamrock Novelty Corporation, whose popular Halloween masks are advertised with an annoyingly unforgettable jingle. ("Three more days to Halloween, Halloween, Halloween!")

Challis and Ellie discover that Conal Cochran (Dan O'Herlihy), the reclusive owner of the company and "the man who invented sticky toilet paper and the dead dwarf gag," secretly despises the gross commercialization of Halloween and seeks a return to the ancient festival's origins, complete with ritual child sacrifice. To this end, the diabolical entrepre-



neur has fitted each of his masks with a specially manufactured microchip that contains fragments from a stolen Stonehenge monolith. Cochran is planning on playing the sickest trick of all, as these supernaturally charged masks will destroy the children wearing them once activated by an electronic signal transmitted from television sets. Challis must race to escape from the Silver Shamrock factory – and the waxen-faced clockwork robots that patrol it – in order to stop the deadly broadcasts from killing millions of hapless trick-or-treaters (including his own children).

Kneale insisted that his name be removed from the credits after learning of the added gore and violence, which he claimed reduced the film to the simplified splatter blueprint that Carpenter had been so keen to avoid. Ironically, *Halloween III* can now be seen as an odd but affecting confection of what is best in both men's work. It retains Kneale's penchant for mixing the mythic with the modern and boasts Carpenter's signature style in its use of immaculate widescreen photography, carefully engineered visceral shocks and a delicious atmosphere of dread.

Whatever the perceived deficiencies of the film, Wallace, Carpenter and Hill must be applauded for at least trying to do something different. They had originally planned on making a new *Halloween* film every year but such lofty ambitions were swiftly put to the sword after the bean-counters at Universal totalled-up *Hill*'s meagre returns. The fans who have had to swallow the vapid, fatuous sequels that followed over the next decade and a half must now only wonder at what new, exciting direction the series may have taken if the film had been a commercial success. As *Halloween III* celebrates its 30th anniversary, *Rue Morgue* invited Tommy Lee Wallace to revisit his memories of the night that nobody came home...





Faces Of Death: *Silver Shamrock workers assemble the deadly Halloween masks, (below) Dr Dan Challis (Tom Atkins) comforts Amy (Stacey Nelkin), and (right) company owner Conal Cochran (Dan O'Herlihy) with one of his deadly products.*

How did you get involved with *Halloween III*? I believe Joe Dante was the original director.

He was. I think a higher-profile picture came up for Joe, one that maybe fell by the wayside later. For my part, after serving in various capacities on John's first four features – most notably as Production Designer/Editor on *Halloween* and *The Fog* – I had declined his invitation to edit *Escape from New York* and was out on my own as a screenwriter, looking for my first feature directing gig. When I received Debra's call, I was in New York writing *Amityville II: The Possession* for Dino de Laurentiis. It was a nice surprise. Previously, I had been briefly ensconced as director of *Halloween II*, an obvious good fit for all concerned, except for the inconvenient fact that when John and Debra's script appeared, I hated it. For me, it seemed to go against everything that had made the original so great. I felt that if I followed through I'd be taking it, a disservice to myself and to their movie, so I dropped out, feeling horrible about walking away from such an opportunity and letting down such good friends. Plus, when you say "no" to people in Hollywood, sometimes they stop returning your calls – even old buddies. I was delighted to be invited aboard *Halloween III*, a reunion of sorts, and a chance to do something fresh and different.

Whose idea was it to drop the characters and plots from the first two *Halloween* films in favour of a completely new storyline?

John and Debra hadn't been that enthusiastic about *any* sequel back then, in the days before franchise-mania took over showbiz. They took on *Halloween II* because that train was leaving the station with or without them. When conversations started about *III*, they took the position that they'd do the gig if they could take it in a completely different direction. I sparked to this notion. Our group thinking evolved into this: one could generate numerous amazing stories on the subject of Halloween, thereby starting a new franchise every fall, each yearly episode capable of generating its own set of sequels. A good idea then, a good idea now. All you needed was a clever ad campaign to prepare the fans of *Halloween* and *Halloween II* for this new experiment. Unfortunately, no one followed through on that part, least of all us. Universal paid lip service, but when push came to shove they didn't set the table, preferring instead to grab whatever opening weekend they could and hope for the best. In truth, I don't think they got or even liked my movie, so the idea of getting past that for a much bigger ultimate payoff just didn't compute, apparently. The backlash, of course, was terrible. Hapless fans expecting The Shape and Jamie Lee Curtis got something entirely different.

You were accused of a "hack rewrite" job on Nigel Kneale's original screenplay. What were the flaws in his script that you were attempting to remedy?

"*H!!!* IS AT ITS HEART A 'POD' MOVIE, NOT A 'KNIFE' MOVIE, AND OF COURSE THE REFERENCE IS TO *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*."

TOMMY LEE WALLACE

I definitely did a rewrite on Nigel's script, after John himself did an uncredited pass. The request from all involved was to "punch it up," add plenty of "scares" and make it "less depressing." I did my best under the pressures of a green-lit production schedule, my first as a director – whose writer, let's remember, had abruptly quit on him. "Hack job" seems like a cheap shot, not a legitimate critique, coming especially, as I assume it did, from the departing writer himself. Nigel Kneale was one of John's heroes, thanks largely to his *Quatermass* character who figured hugely in British television and features throughout the '50s and '60s. His work is widely valued for its acerbic but thoughtful, visionary qualities. The script he turned in for *H!!!* was fascinating, quirky, full of great ideas, extremely dark and maybe a little tedious. There was a general consensus from the top down about its deficiencies. It did not seem to recognize that its target audience was American. It seemed oblivious to the still-building juggernaut in low-budget horror that had been established by the original *Halloween* and its imitators, and the attendant set of conventions: pop-up scares, quick pace, roller-coaster dynamics. Its tone was unrelentingly dark and, though the work conveyed a twisted sense of humour which I appreciated very much, the characters themselves were somewhat flat, lacked inner life, and had little personal humour to offer. Conal Cochran was the only one who jumped off the page.

John Carpenter has spoken of an "anti-Irish bitterness" running through Kneale's script.

Well, Nigel certainly used the Irish as the bad guys. I don't know much about United Kingdom politics, but I'm sure this was pretty un-PC at the time, especially coming from a Brit. John and I rounded a lot of anti-Irish sentiment out of the script, but didn't feel the need to change Cochran's heritage. Bad guys come in all shapes and sizes, and "Silver Shamrock" does roll nicely off the tongue. One could say Nigel was something of a bitter fellow in general. He set high standards for himself and others. I think he had been repeatedly disappointed at the way his work was treated, especially in the US. *H!!!* proved to be no exception.

Didn't Kneale object to the added moments of violence?

After Nigel made it clear he wasn't going to address our notes, I didn't pay much attention to whatever his objections were. I'm sure he articulated them in subsequent interviews, but you've got to understand that making a movie is like going to war. When one of your generals or key allies decides to quit on you, you can't afford to care much about his way of thinking if he won't stick around to defend it. You just salute him – or shoot him – and then soldier on without him. I've always saluted Nigel but, looking back, his refusal to consider changes to his own respectable but hastily written screenplay does seem to me now rather petulant and unprofessional.

There's a nice irony in Cochran seeking revenge on those who have transformed an ancient religious rite into an obscene excuse to wear Halloween masks and beg for candy.

I suppose, but revenge would only be a side issue for an ancient warlock like Cochran, whose tribal imperative insists on sacrifice – child sacrifice. "It's time again. The planets are in alignment, and it's time again." A fan recently told me that during that time, back in 1982, the planets really were in alignment, whatever that means.

Dan O'Herlihy makes an imposing villain as Cochran, doesn't he?

Hitchcock said your movie is only as good as its villain. I lucked out big-time with Dan – Debra's idea, by the way. A perfect gentleman – well-prepared, consummate professional. A licensed architect, too. A charming, excellent conversationalist, he enjoyed nothing more than a table full of friends and family lingering for hours over dinner and drinks. The best of the Irish. I miss him.

And Tom Atkins, our intrepid hero?

Like Dan, a pro's pro. Always up, always for the team, always there, ready to go. We're still friends and both of us are still out there, plugging away.

A question often asked: what happened to all the kids not tuned into the "big giveaway" and not wearing Silver Shamrock masks?

Cochran pulls off this horrific grand-scale act of child sacrifice, whose numbers are likely to be in the millions. That's a big "Mission Accomplished." Those who survived would be of no concern to him.

I suppose they could have been eaten by the bugs that came haemorrhaging out of everybody's heads?

Oh, the "collateral damage" of this thing would be pretty grim, to be sure, and so much the better. Isn't that how Dick Cheney would think?

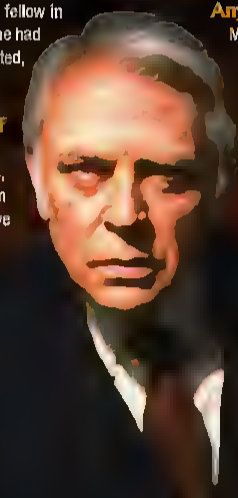
Any interesting anecdotes about the shoot?

My first child was born, shortly after the film's release, to me and Nancy Kyes [a.k.a. "Nancy Loomis"], "Annie" from *Halloween*. She also played Challis' ex-wife Linda in *H!!!*, which means that for Nancy and me, the production was paralleled with a far more important production and prep period. By the way, Nancy is the only actor who appears in the flesh in *Halloween I*, *II* and *III*. Jamie Lee Curtis and others qualify marginally via the TV broadcast. Jamie Lee was a friend of the show, especially those of us who had been on the original with her, most notably Nancy and Debra. She came down and cheered us on when we were on the soundstage doing the big climax on the "Stonehenge" set, and yes, I'm pretty sure that's her voice doing the phone operator [at the film's climax] during another drop-by in post production.

Just how involved was John Carpenter creatively in the film?

John was the exemplary "godfather" of *H!!!* Before I came

Cont'd on p 45





HALLOWEEN II (1981)

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Pleasence and Charles Cyphers
Directed by Rick Rosenthal
Written by John Carpenter and Debra Hill
Scream Factory



It was just last year that we were reviewing Universal's *Halloween II* Blu-ray and lamenting what could have been, though it was a decent looking presentation, it came with little retrospective material. Shout! Factory has tried to rectify that error with its two disc Collector's Edition of the slasher classic – part of its new Scream Factory sub label.

Though the 1080p, 2.35:1 aspect ratio presentation doesn't offer any improvements over the last release, audio-wise it fares better with the new lossless mix. As for extras, disc one contains two commentary tracks, one with director Rick Rosenthal and actor Leo Rossi (who plays the oversexed EMS driver who gets killed in the famous hot-tub scene), and one with stuntman Dick Warlock, who played Myers. Unfortunately the first is not that informative and so quiet that you'd swear Rosenthal and Rossi are checking their email instead of watching the movie. The second track proves more rewarding thanks to Rob G. from website Icons of Fright who serves as the moderator and keeps things moving.

A new documentary, *The Nightmare Isn't Over! – The Making of Halloween II*, features commentary by several key personalities including Rosenthal, Warlock, executive producer Irwin Yablans and various actors. (Both star Jamie Lee Curtis and Charles Cyphers, who reprises his role in the film as cop Leigh Brackett, are absent.) While a couple of the participants seem downright bored, some nice tidbits do come up, such as why John Carpenter didn't direct, how Rosenthal got the job and reactions to the script.

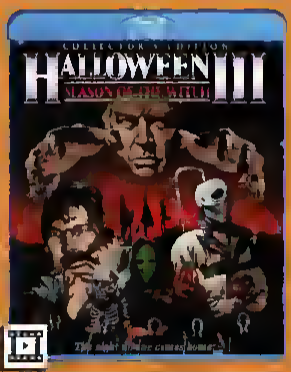
Also included is a segment featuring Sean Clark of *Horrorhound* magazine taking viewers to the original shooting locations and the same alternate ending and deleted scenes that were on Universal's disc, only this time they include commentary by Rosenthal. These scenes were taken from the television version of the film, which is housed on disc two, presented in standard definition. Finally, some surprisingly cool, very '80s TV radio spots are included.

Oh, and if you noticed the lack of plot description here, it's because *Halloween II* is basically just a bloodier extension of the first one, with masked boogeyman Michael Myers chasing Laurie Strode (Curtis) around, this time mostly in a hospital, and Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasence) backing her up.

Lastly, you may remember that Universal's disc included the '80s horror doc *Terror in the Aisles* as an extra. Frustratingly, it is not included on Scream Factory's release, but otherwise, fans of the series should accept this version as definitive.

HALLOWEEN III: Season of the Witch (1982)

Starring Tom Atkins, Stacey Nelkin and Dan O'Herlihy
Written and directed by Tommy Lee Wallace
Scream Factory



It may not have Michael Myers in it, which made it a box office disappointment, but the reality is that *Season of the Witch*, with its evil corporation/deadly Halloween masks/bodysnatchers storyline is by far the best of the sequels, even if it ignores the rest of the franchise.

For a low-budget, early '80s effort, this Blu-ray is decent but could've been improved, both in terms of image and sound. There is a lot of grain in places and the picture quality lacks detail, though the colours are bright and robust. The new lossless soundtrack sounds great during the opening score but adds little else.

For extras, Scream Factory provides two commentary tracks, the first with writer/director Tommy Lee Wallace, moderated by Rob Galluzzo of Icons of Fright and Sean Clark of *Horrorhound*. Wallace sounds very passionate about his work and doesn't hide his anger about the movie's critical dismissal. The second track, featuring Tom Atkins and moderated by Michael Felsher of Red Shirt Pictures, brings more fun to the disc. The two point out the hilariously anti-PC nature of Atkins' Dr. Challis character, who ignores his wife and kids, hits on every nurse and lab technician at the hospital and randomly sleeps with girls half his age without a second thought.

Also included is a documentary featuring Wallace, Atkins, executive producer Irwin Yablans, stunt coordinator Dick Warlock and some of the other actors. This feature proves the most valuable for telling the story of how this series aberration came to be. Clark provides another Horror's Hallowed Grounds segment, where he visits original shooting locations, including the bar where Atkins' character has his 10 a.m. cocktails.

After being buried in the dark closet of cinema history for so long, the rich content on *Halloween III*'s Blu-ray makes it that much sweeter. Without a doubt, even with its flaws, this is a key release of the fall season.

HALLOWEEN 4:
The Return of Michael Myers (1988)

Starring Donald Pleasence, Ellie Cornell and Danielle Harris
Directed by Dwight H. Little
Written by Alan B. McElroy
Anchor Bay



Halloween 4 marks the beginning of the Moustapha Akkad-era of the franchise, as the producer purchased the remaining series rights with the intention of bringing it back to its basics after the weird, Michael Myers-less *Halloween III*. The movie introduces Jamie Lloyd (a young Danielle Harris) as the niece of Myers, who, together with her stepsister Rachel Carruthers (Ellie Cornell), must survive the night when the masked killer escapes from the hospital and returns to Haddonfield for more slice 'n' dice. The result was perhaps the best of the Myers sequels, a well-constructed slasher that does an adequate job of imitating the John Carpenter classic.

From a technical standpoint, Anchor Bay's new Blu-ray is lacking, however. While the high-def transfer is a noticeable upgrade over previous standard-def releases, the abundant nighttime sequences are very grainy. Plus, the Dolby TrueHD audio track is weak, boasting limited range and mostly sounding flat.

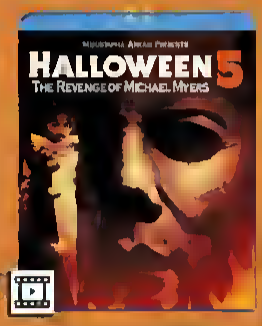
The disc is stacked with extras, though many are from previous releases, with the notable exception of a commentary track by director Dwight H. Little, moderated by Justin Beahm, author of the upcoming *Halloween: The Complete Authorized History*. It's a winner, with Little digging into the production history, various trivia bits and the supernatural vs. real powers of Michael Myers. The second commentary (from previous releases), with Cornell and Harris, is entertaining but a little frustrating because neither know much about the franchise or seemingly the horror genre in general. A third commentary by writer Alan B. McElroy (*Wrong Turn*) and moderated by Anthony Masi of halloweenmovies.com proves much more insightful.

Also repurposed is a *Halloween 4/5* Discussion Panel, an event that took place at the Halloween Returns to Haddonfield convention in 2003, and a trailer. Annoyingly, the documentary *Halloween 4: The Final Cut*," which was featured on previous releases, is absent.

Considering the technical specs aren't up to par, the only real benefit to this one is the new director commentary. Pass.

HALLOWEEN 5:
The Revenge of Michael Myers (1989)

Starring Donald Pleasence, Danielle Harris and Ellie Cornell
Directed by Dominique Othenin-Girard
Written by Michael Jacobs, Dominique Othenin-Girard and Shem Bitterman
Anchor Bay



After *Halloween 4* successfully brought back Michael Myers and generated some excitement with a final twist that saw Jamie Lloyd picking up the evil legacy and murdering her stepmother, *Halloween 5* hit theatres one year later with a resounding thud. This amateur snoozefest downplayed the significance of the previous film's ending and made some questionable moves, notably the casual killing off of Ellie Cornell's character, turning Jamie into a mute with a psychic link to Myers, and adding some ill-advised comic relief with two bumbling cop characters. It also marked the first appearance of the Curse of Thorn subplot that would be explored in more detail in *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers*.

For what it's worth, the high-def transfer on *Halloween 5* is significantly better than that of *Halloween 4*. It's sharp, colourful and detailed, with little grain. Sound-wise, the score, dialogue and effects are all well-balanced and crisp.

Like *Halloween 4*, this also contains just one new special feature, a commentary track by Don Shanks, who plays Myers, and author Justin Beahm. It's solid because Shanks seems to know a lot about the production, even aspects with which he wasn't directly involved. He talks about what it was like working with a child actress, the introduction of the Man in Black and reveals details such as the fact that someone had recently died in the car driven by douchebag character Mike.

Previous extras carried over include the commentary track with director Dominique Othenin-Girard, Danielle Harris and Jeffrey Landman, who played Jamie's friend Billy. Harris even puts Othenin-Girard on the spot about some of the directorial decisions with which she clearly isn't too pleased. Also included from previous discs are some behind-the-scenes footage, a promo and a trailer. Missing, though, is the *Inside Halloween 5* documentary that appeared on the 2001 and 2006 DVD releases.

Overall, a strong release of a terrible movie that's for series completists only.



aboard – or [illegible] Danta before me – I think John kind of gave Debra free rein to take her concept of "witch-craft meets the computer age" wherever she wanted to. When the script was perceived as wanting after Nigel dropped out, John did what he felt he had to and rewrote Nigel to punch things up. I think John may have been surprised when I found his rewrite wanting as well and did another pass myself, but his reaction seemed to me to be mostly amusement – maybe even pride – that his protégé was taking charge. John is ferocious about being in control of his own movies and he extended similar territorial privileges to me, even though I was a first-timer. He was always there if I needed guidance, yet he never crowded me or tried to push an agenda. Having been there several times himself by this point, he understood the kind of environment a director needs to do his best and he provided it – in no small part by mostly staying clear and letting Debra apply her formidable day-to-day producing skills to the effort. John and Debra gave me the basic concept, they gave me Nigel Kneale with his very interesting, articulate and unusual script, and they gave me rock-solid backing, but in practice the movie was mine pretty much down the line. Shortly before release, John called to tell me the studio was uneasy about the "no compromise" ending. He said they would prefer something perhaps more upbeat but that he'd back whatever I wanted to do. I decided to stay with what we had, and that was that.

Tell us more about that ending...

That ending was a tribute to Don Siegel, whose 1956 masterpiece *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was marred somewhat by a clunky add-on bookend structure forced on him by the studio, which softened the original ending – Kevin McCarthy wild in the street, shouting "You're next!" into the camera. Somehow I felt our ending kind of righted that wrong in a way and it certainly felt like the correct choice for my movie. *HIII* is at its heart a "pod" movie, not a "knife" movie, and of course the reference is to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Besides the final-curtain homage, we named our destination town "Santa Mira" after the town in that film. *Invasion* was shot in and around Sierra Madre, California, so we shot a couple scenes there in tribute.

The deliberate tracking shots, carefully orchestrated shocks and Carpenter's own electronic score recall the master's unmistakable style. To what extent did John influence you as a director?

Oh, hugely, of course. Now, in the end, John and I are very different individuals, so I would expect our natural directing styles to differ quite a bit as well. But back in 1982, I was acutely aware *HIII* would be playing very much to an audience cre-







Head Games: (top to bottom) Conal shows off a Silver Shamrock mask; a woman loses face from product tampering; Dr. Challis gets more than he bargained for; and (inset) a mask is activated

ated by John – and me at his side – so I deliberately hewed to his style as a creative choice and a solid foundation block for finding my own voice. Over a lifetime, John has taught me a lot. He taught me the basic rock 'n' roll walk on bass guitar. He taught me the most efficient way to play a G-chord, how to write a song, how to cut 35 mm film, how to crank out a script over a weekend. You gotta believe that along the way I picked up a thing or two from him about directing.

One of the most recognizable elements of the film is the series of infamous Silver Shamrock commercials that continually play throughout the movie.

I went into the studio with John's musical sidekick, Alan Howarth, engineer par excellence and composer in his own right. Alan set me up and I did all the tracks, the keyboard synthesizer, each munchkin voice in harmony, the whole shebang. It's "London Bridge," of course. Head arrangement, everything improvised, that left hand based loosely on an old student piano piece called "The Spinning Song."



The announcer's voice is also you, correct?

All this got started on *Assault on Precinct 13*, *Halloween* and *The Fog*. Being in the cutting room all the time, I would record temporary tracks for any and everything: missing lines, police calls, radio voices, whatever, even sound effects. Turned out I had a distinct voice for a certain kind of cheesy radio/TV announcer, which survived the editing process. Plus, as a voice-over artist, I worked fast and cheap – now as well as then.

Some critics read the film as an attack on large faceless corporations and American consumerism.

The word "attack" implies an assault on an innocent victim. Call it "hard-nosed scrutiny" or "critique of an insidious modern problem" and I'll go along. I certainly have a serious mistrust of large faceless corporations and runaway American consumerism. In the case of *Hill*, you can also throw in commercial television for a kind of poisonous trifecta. They do make easy targets, of course, but they deserve every last bit of heat and criticism they receive and more. The juggernaut of corporate America with its Madison Avenue and pop-media shills leading a narcotized and fearful public by the nose has brought a once-vibrant country to its knees. It's amazing that the dire warnings of *Hill* are coming true, metaphorically, 30 years later. All those monsters, those agents of evil exploded from the masks and embedded in certain kids' brains – and these kids grew up and went to work on Wall Street, Madison Avenue, Fox News and hate radio and their billions of subsidiaries, and here we are. Voila! Get it? Now what do we do about it? It's not just a horror movie after all, it's real life.

Were you braced for the negative reaction from those who felt cheated by the absence of Michael Myers?

We were appallingly naive, especially me. You put a Roman numeral after a title and it's a sequel, right? You're telling the fans what to expect and we blew it. Even if Universal had kept up their end of the bargain and done a proper ad campaign, we should've at least considered releasing it as plain old *Season of the Witch*. You live and learn. Would it have had greater success being released simply as *Season of the Witch*? Probably. On the other hand, would it have gotten made at all without the *Halloween* imprimatur? Probably not.

As ludicrous as this may sound, it has been suggested that *Halloween III* was made to intentionally "kill" the franchise.

I think John and Debra sincerely intended to try something different. You could get into all sorts of theories about subconscious desires, I don't know. After *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, John and Debra had definitely had enough of the Michael Myers *Halloween* legend – except for the money, of course. But had *Hill* spawned a long-running yearly anthology with fresh and interesting stories coming out each fall, like we all hoped, I guarantee you each of us would have remained involved in some capacity. It could've been a gold mine, both creatively and financially.

Do you feel that *Halloween III* enjoys more respect now than it ever has?

I can't tell you how many fans have approached me over the years with sentiments like this: "Actually, it's a great movie and I love it now, but the first time [I saw it] I kept waiting for Michael Myers." A lot of the problem back then was expectation. That's what ad campaigns are supposed to be about. The fan base for this movie grew slowly but surely over the years. Experiencing this has been personally very gratifying for me and has healed what was once a very painful wound. There's a huge audience that watches this movie every year as part of their Halloween ritual.



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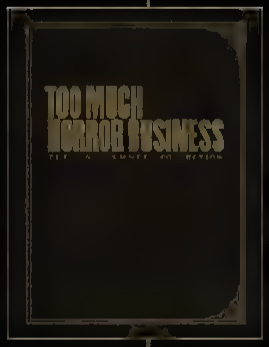
KIRK HAMMETT UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD. On the surface, you'd think the famed lead guitarist for Metallica would feel completely at home rubbing elbows with celebrities and living the rock star life, but what even some of the band's biggest fans may not know is that the typically shy musician is an avid hunter-gatherer of horror collectibles. His favourite day of the year is Halloween, he identifies with monsters, he skulks around online looking for coveted pieces – in short, he doesn't just relate to us, he's one of us.

For more than four decades, Hammett has been devouring horror movies and tracking down props, posters and ephemera so fervently that this month he's released a hardcover book about his extensive collection, titled *Too Much Horror Business* (Abrams Image).

"It's my gift to all the Monster Kids out there," he says, on the phone from his San Francisco home. "It came to a point where I turned a couple of corners with my collection and found some pieces that I consider milestones, one of them being Boris Karloff's outfit from *The Black Cat*, a couple pieces of art and some vintage monster toys from the '60s that I didn't even know existed. I thought, 'Okay, I'm peaking.'"

Tired of inviting the same old people over for show and tell, Hammett thought it was high time to share his collection with the world and hatched the idea of compiling a book. With the help of Steffan Chirazi (editor of Metallica's official fan club magazine, *So What!*), Hammett spent three years working on the

224-page tome, which includes 300 colour and black and white photographs of more than 1000 pieces from his impressive assemblage of horror memorabilia. Richly shot and elegantly presented, *Too Much Horror Business* is sectioned into three main parts: the voluminous Movie Posters & Props (which is further broken down by decade), Toys & Masks (everything from a Witch Dr. Head Shrinkers Kit and Hasbro Monster Mystery board games to reproductions of masks manufactured by Don Post and Verne Langdon) and Artwork (including numerous original Basil Gogos paintings). Each section includes lavish photos of often mind-blowingly rare and jaw-droppingly fetching pieces (a French Paramount Pictures print ad for 1920's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* or American one-sheet teaser posters for *Frankenstein* and *The Invisible Man*, anyone?), insightfully captioned by Hammett. There's also three interview segments with the introspective guitarist, who tries to explain his need to curate a collection that he estimates is still only one-third the size of that amassed by his hero, the late Forrest J Ackerman, beloved editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine.



"Forry was the first guy that I was ever aware of who actually collected movie memorabilia," he recalls. "[When I was] reading *Famous Monsters*, there'd be pictures where he would be dressed in Dracula's cape, he'd be wearing the *Dracula* ring and he'd also have the scarab ring from *The Mummy* – he'd have all of these movie posters and the creatures from *Outer Limits* in his living room, and I would always think, 'How cool is it that he has these monsters that you can see in all of these movies, and he can sit right next to them and talk to them? He can bring his friends over to show 'em, and I just thought that was so amazingly cool."

Even at age 49, Hammett exudes a boyish enthusiasm as he explains how his love of collecting stemmed from the early connection he was able to draw between his own life and the plights of the creatures on the silver screen.

"Ever since I can remember, I've always felt like an outsider. Not really connected, not really relating to society and culture, not in the ways I was expected to. And when I would watch monster movies, I would feel like, 'Hey, these monsters are just like me. They don't really fit in.' That was an early appeal for me, and why I like monsters so much."

Hammett admits his love of comic books and monster magazines regularly raised the ire of the nuns who taught at his Catholic school ("They thought this stuff was all slightly demonic") but that his parents were actually supportive of his fledgling interests, particularly his mom, who liked the fact that he had taken to reading on his own with such verve. As he got older and began to fully understand the finer plot points of the monster movies, it was the elaborate makeup and Monster Kid culture that drew him further down the genre rabbit hole.

"I started exploring [the writings of] Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, and then later on H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King and Dennis Wheatley – just more of it," explains Hammett. "I discovered more toys, the pre-Code horror comics of the '50s, and just started getting deeper and deeper into it because there was more for me to explore. And I have to say, it hasn't really ended yet. To this day, I'm still very into this stuff, obviously."

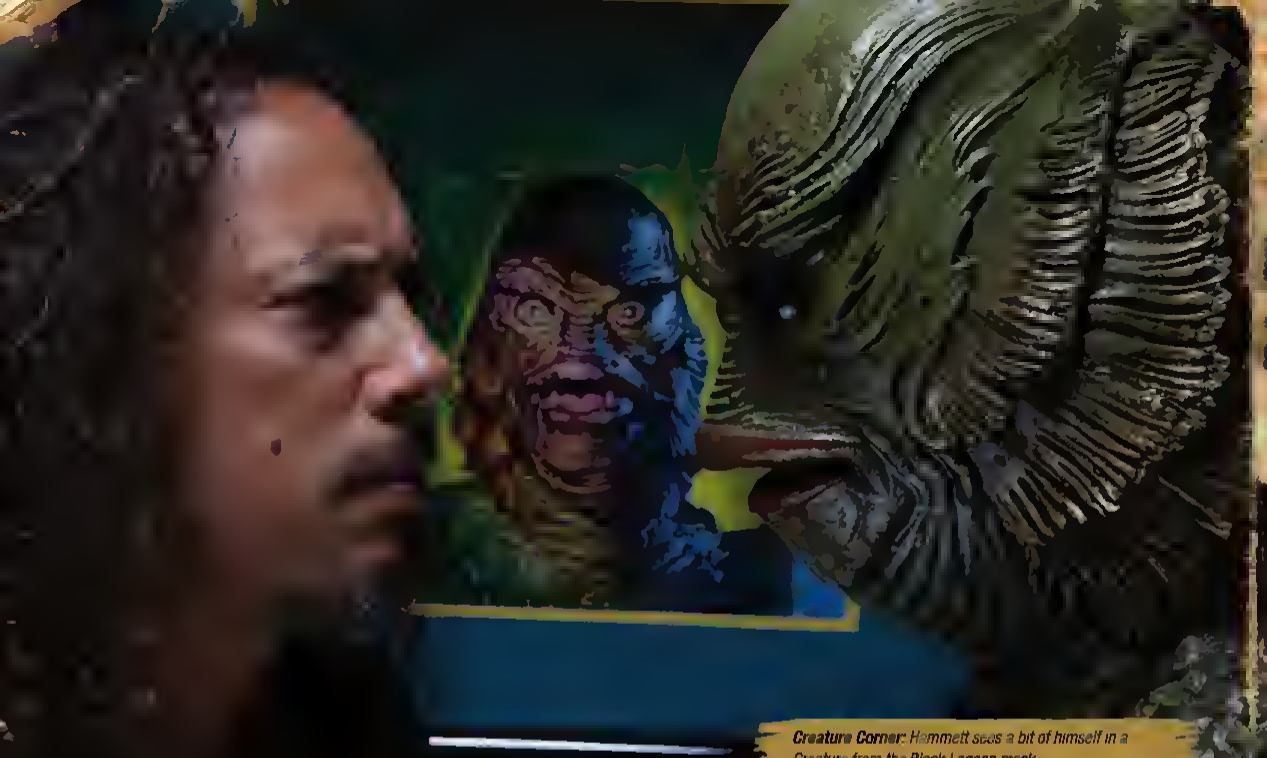
There was one period of Hammett's life when the horror collecting took a back seat, however: the fateful day that he discovered the guitar. The love affair between the teenaged Hammett and the instrument was immediate and it completely consumed him for the next six or seven years. After forming a couple of Bay Area bands, including Exodus, in the early '80s, the baby-faced guitarist replaced Dave Mustaine in a local thrash outfit called Metallica – a quartet that also included singer/guitarist James Hetfield, drummer Lars Ulrich and original bassist Cliff Burton. Mustaine would later form Megadeth, but not before levelling accusations that Hammett had achieved fame using riffs that Mustaine had written for one of the band's earlier demos. Nevertheless, Metallica's 1983 debut album, *Kill 'em All*, was an immediate underground success.

"Once I started making money with the band and I had some disposable income, I went straight into buying comic books again, monster magazines, toys, artwork, the whole deal, and discovered that it still meant the same to me as it ever did," explains Hammett. "It's this weird obsession that I have – whether it's healthy or unhealthy, I don't know and don't really care – that makes me really happy. And if it makes me happy, it can't be that bad."

Three more records would quickly follow – *Ride the Lightning* (1984), *Master of Puppets* (1986) and *...And Justice for All* (1988) – further cementing the band's reputation for epic metal anthems steeped in darkness, despair, complex arrangements and Hammett's blistering leads. On the strength of tracks such as "The Four Horsemen," "Fade to Black," "The Thing That Should Not Be," "Master of Puppets," "Creeping Death," "Blackened," the haunting pseudo-ballad "One" and the band's 1991 mainstream breakthrough release, the self-titled "Black Album," Metallica would go on to become the most influential heavy band of the 1980s.



Best in Pieces *– (from L to R) A selection of Hammett's 1960s cryptozoo toys, a rare Frankenstein head speaker, a three-sheet poster and Martian suit prop from Invaders From Mars (1953)*



Creature Corner: *Hammett sees a bit of himself in a Creature from the Black Lagoon mask.*

to date having sold more than 100 million albums worldwide over the course of nine studio efforts. Years after staring wistfully at pictures of his idol, Hammett would even welcome Ackerman as a guest at a Metallica show in 2005 ("He loved it!" exclaims Hammett incredulously). A picture of the pair backstage appears on the very last page of *Too Much Horror Business*.

During the late '80s and early '90s, and with much more than just a childhood allowance to blow on collectibles, Hammett says he spent countless hours scouring second-hand stores and flea markets while on tour, eventually expanding his collection to include pricier horror movie props and displays. Some of his most notable pieces include a life-size silicone replica of Bela Lugosi (dressed in the original vest and jacket he wore in *White Zombie*), the actual papier-mâché masks created by Emile LaVigne for Bud Abbott and Lou Costello to wear during the costume ball sequence in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), and a prop head sculpted by Bud Westmore from *Revenge of the Creature* (1955). Hammett also reveals that he acquired a lot of his favourite items by even more charming, antiquated means.

"When I got back into [collecting] heavily, I remember I spent a lot of time on the phone, calling up people that I didn't even know, if I heard that they had a vintage monster toy or a movie poster on the wall," he says. "Or I'd write a letter. You know, 'Rumour has it that you have a movie poster on your wall and I was wondering if I could come by and talk to you about it.' Nowadays, you have eBay and email and everything is a lot more instantaneous. As a result, things are harder to find because it's all tapped out. Something rare might show up on eBay once every three or four months, and nine times out of ten, this person has talked to someone who's said that their item is worth millions of dollars when it isn't. And that's a little bit of a problem. Having said that, it's been a long time since I've written anybody a letter."

> "WHEN I WOULD WATCH MONSTER MOVIES, I WOULD FEEL LIKE, 'HEY, THESE MONSTERS ARE JUST LIKE ME.'"
>
> KIRK HAMMETT

Thumbing through Hammett's book, it's clear that he's made a concerted effort to focus most of his collection around memorabilia associated with horror films from the 1920s to '70s; a decision he affirms is largely for sentimental reasons, but also because he finds the developed back stories and inherent compassion and sympathetic nature of the classic monsters to be sorely missing from most contemporary creature tales.

"I'm not really interested in movies that portray a lot of graphic violence or violence for violence's sake," he attests. "A lot of the horror movies that I love and worship have some sort of fantasy, occult, supernatural or paranormal element – those are the type of movies that I tend to gravitate to. There are a lot of great modern horror movie characters out there, the most recent one being the Alien, and I love Pumpkinhead. Those are the only ones that really come to mind now. A movie like *Saw*? I was mildly entertained by it, but it doesn't hold the same weight for me as *Bride of Frankenstein*."

Like most collectors, Hammett has his holy grails – items for which he believes he'll be searching for years to come – including an original one-sheet poster for *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932), the very film that inspired the name of the magazine you're currently holding. But, as previously mentioned, it was the acquisition of one such prized possession that signalled the time had come to publish a record of his collection: the outfit that Boris Karloff wore in 1934's *The Black Cat*, which he displays on a silicone statue of the actor, similar to the one he has of Lugosi.

"When it came up at an auction, I couldn't believe that it still existed and that it had survived," he explains. "To have the outfit that one of my favourite movie actors wore in one of my favourite movies is incredible to me. There's also an-



Kirk's Crypt: *Nearly the full extent of Hammett's collection, circa 1987 and (inset) a publicity photo of the guitarist made-up as Kirk Von Hammett*

"EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER, I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE AN OUTSIDER."

KIRK HAMMETT

other really great piece that I have that's called the Nebularium. It's a concave mirror that was part of the lab equipment that was in *Frankenstein, Bride of Frankenstein*, *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, and then later on in *Young Frankenstein* and *Dracula vs. Frankenstein*, which is kind of like a cheap B-movie but I love it anyway."

This past June, the line separating Hammett's collection and his dey job in Metallica blurred; beyond the custom *Mummy*-, *Dracula*- and *Frankenstein*-inspired guitars he plays during the band's live performances, he also took select pieces and poster reproductions from his macabre museum out on tour as part of Kirk's Crypt, a sideline attraction to the band's inaugural two-day Orion Music + More festival in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In addition to bringing along rare toys, props and poster reproductions, Hammett turned up in the tented area to take questions from the audience and participate in Q&A discussions with horror guests such as acclaimed artist Daniel Horne (*RM#102*), actress Linda Blair (*The Exorcist*), special effects technician Anthony Giordano (*Spider-Man 2*, *Scooby Doo 2: Monster Unleashed*) and Kevin Clement, a.k.a. Mr. Chiller, the creator of New Jersey's annual Chiller Theatre Toy, Model and Fan Expo (taking place October 26 to 28 this year).

Once the band decided to brand an event that was uniquely Metallica, Hammett says the concept of Kirk's Crypt seemed like a natural fit, and one that earned the full support of his bandmates.

"Lars is a big art collector, so he can understand what drives a person to collect stuff," he explains. "James just likes horror movies to begin with, and [current bassist] Rob Trujillo used to be a comic guy from way back and is actually a really great artist who's into animation and whatnot. He loves the whole horror movie genre too. My manager, Peter Mintz, is a big comic book nerd so I'm kind of surrounded by people who just understand me. And I have to say, one of Cliff Burton's most favourite films was *Dawn of the Dead* and he loved *The Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead II*. We watched a lot of horror movies together and bonded over H.P. Lovecraft."

The Orion festival isn't the first time Hammett's two principal passions have crossed streams, though. In August of 1989, Metallica was the second band to be profiled as part of the late Todd Loren's unauthorized and highly controversial Rock 'n' Roll Comics series and, years later, the band members' likenesses were used for a set of action figures created by McFarlane Toys called "Metallica: Harvesters of Sorrow," based on the group's 1988 *...And Justice for All* tour set-up (Jason Newsted was the band's bassist at that time). Hammett refers to both events as "dreams come true" that served as inspiration for him to recently launch his own line of merchandise under the banner Kirk Von Hammett Toys, in conjunction with the release of *Too Much Horror Business*.

"There's a [publicity] picture of me made up to look like, not really a vampire, not really a werewolf, more just like a general ghoul, and that persona I've been calling Kirk Von Hammett," he describes. "These toys have been based on that. We're also going to be doing movie poster reproductions, big prints of some of the Kirk Von Hammett personality shots that are in the book and we'll take it from there... I want to make toys that I would like to see. Like, it would be cool to make a Bride of Frankenstein glow toy like the old Aurora models or maybe some monsters on hot rods that have not yet been made. We're basically exploring that right now and seeing what we can do. I'm just feeding the inner nerd in me and hoping that there are other people out there whose inner nerd I can feed as well."

Wait, the lead guitarist of Metallica referring to himself as a nerd? While the release of *Too Much Horror Business* all but guarantees new respect from the genre community, has Hammett no concern about preserving whatever crumbs of rock cred remain following the band's highly publicized battle with file-sharing service Napster and the release of its often cringe-inducing, warts-and-all 2004 documentary *Some Kind of Monster*?

"If all of a sudden everybody sees me as a horror nerd, it's not going to be any different from the way it was when I was younger and I'm totally fine with that," he says, adding that he's already begun work on a second volume of the book. "If I'm blowing my whole cover as a cool heavy metal guy, I don't care because this is where my heart is, this is one of my passions – music and my family certainly being other passions – and I've learned never to be afraid of something that you really feel passionate about."

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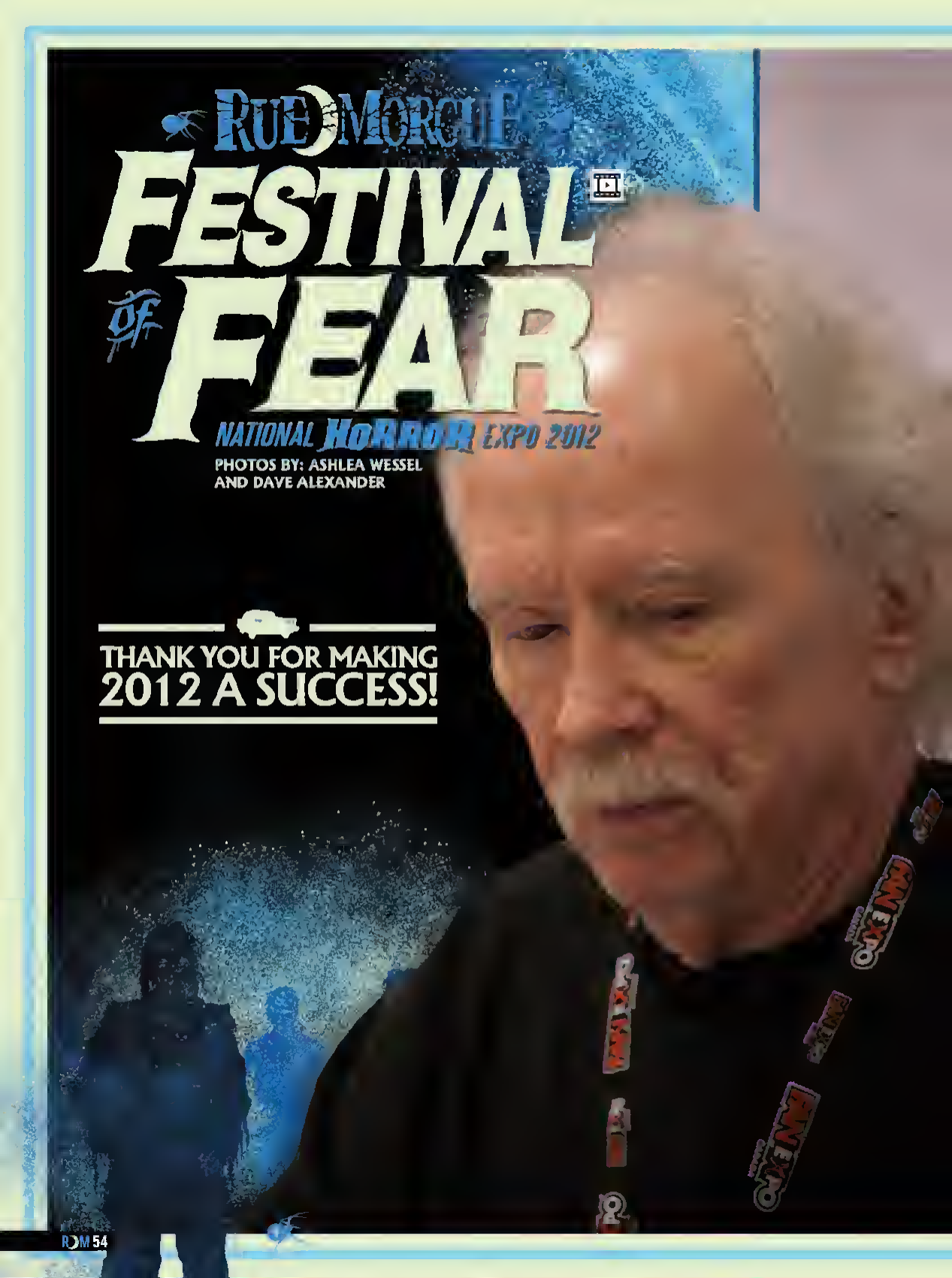
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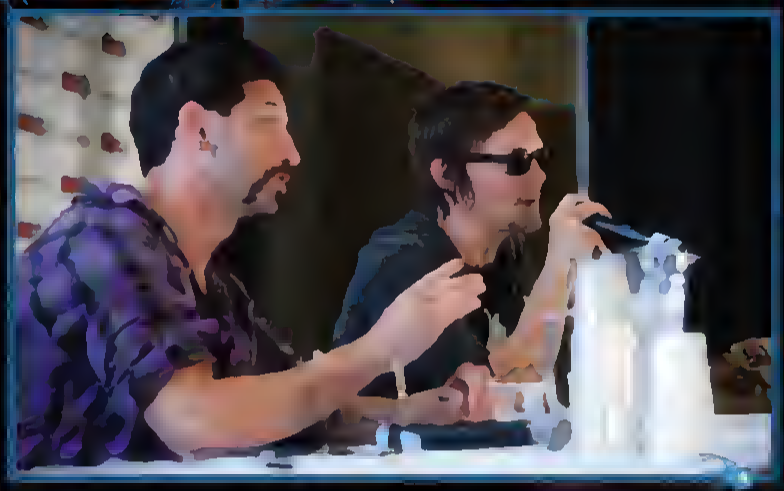




1. Guest of Honour John Carpenter 2. *RM* online editor April Snellings and Tom Noonan 3. Lilsa Ladouceur and *True Blood*'s Nelsan Ellis 4. (From L to R) The Gore-met, Tal Zimerman, John W Bowen, Last Chance Lance and Aaron Von Lupton during the Gore, Girls and Godforsaken Cinema panel 5. Aaron Von Lupton shows his *Fright Night* tattoo to Jerry Dandrige himself, Chris Sarandon 6. (From L to R) Actors Julian Richings and Aaron Poole, visual FX artist Anthony Scott Burns, actor Mitch Markowitz and writer/director Rodrigo Gudiño at *The Last Will and Testament of Rosalind Leigh* panel 7. Unruly Rue Crew members Jen Wright, *RM* designer Andrew Wright, managing editor Monica S Kuebler, Paige Reynolds, art director Justin Erickson, Marie-Ève Larin and editor-in-chief Dave Alexander





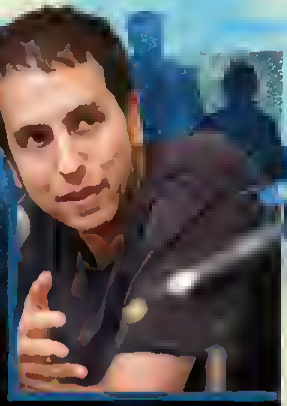












1. *RM* President Rodrigo Gudiño and Tony "Candyman" Todd **2.** Dave Alexander hangs with John Carpenter **3.** *RM*'s Monstro Bizarro columnist Lyle Blackburn talks cryptids **4.** Jon Bernthal (left) and Norman Reedus of *The Walking Dead* **5.** *RM* France correspondent Fabien Delage meets The Gore-met **6.** Composer Alan Howarth (left) and video manipulator Jade Boyd score our Shocktail Party with cues from John Carpenter movies **7.** *RM*'s Monica S. Kuebler, Karen Dales, Sass Cadeaux, Stephen Peari and Alan Draven at the Indie Genre Fiction panel **8.** *RM* copy editor Claire Horsnell **9.** Filmmaker Brandon Cronenberg talks *Antiviral* **10.** Astron-6's Steve Kostanski and moderator Peter Kuplowsky discuss special effects **11.** Our fearless FoF volunteers make monster faces **12.** James Marsters and Juliet Landau of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* **13.** (L to R) partygoers Veronika Star, Xander Star and Freakynat Vegas **14.** Tal Zimerman (left) hosts a poster art panel, with Ghoulish Gary Pullin, Jason Edmiston and Justin Erickson **15.** Tattoo legend Bob Tyrrell inks up *RM*'s Jody Infurnari





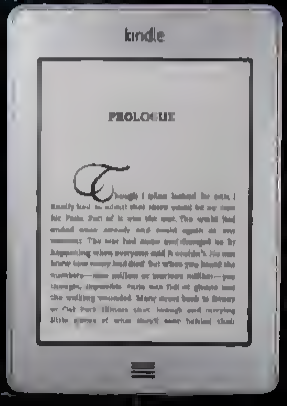


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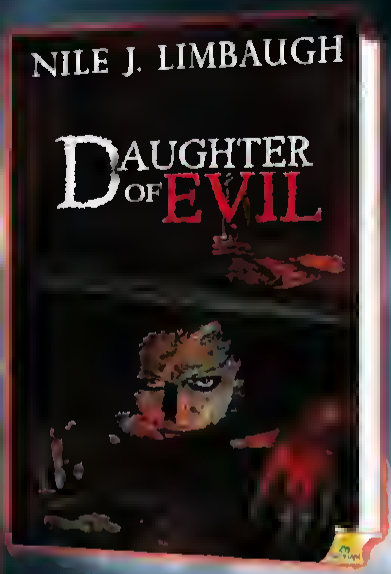
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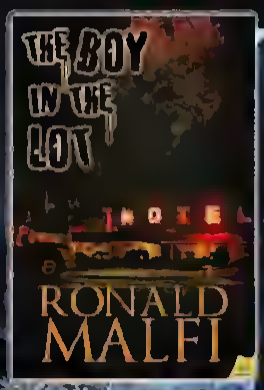




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This HOUSE IS HAUNTED

by Mike Beardsall

"WELCOME FOOLISH MORTALS, TO THE HAUNTED MANSION."

This ominous line beckons all who enter the infamous spook-house located in Disney parks all over the world. Once inside, guests are transported into a magical realm unlike any other, filled with stretching rooms, seemingly endless hallways and 999 ghosts to haunt them!

But just how did this home of wall-to-wall creeps find its way to the so-called "Happiest place on Earth? And just what spirit possessed Walt Disney to come up with the idea in the first place?

"Walt often talked about having a haunted house as part of the park, and it was a featured part of many of his early concepts," explains Jeff Baham, creator of the fan site doombuggies.com and author of *An Unofficial History of Disney's Haunted Mansion*. "Drama and darker notions have always been a part of Disney Studios' output. Go back and take a look at *Snow White* again, if you haven't seen it in a while. So having a haunted house in his theme park would have been a natural inclination."

The thrills of the Haunted Mansion begin long before park-goers even climb into the ride's signature "doombuggies," which whisk you through the manor house on a track. While guests queue up outside, they can read the humorous epitaphs on the various graves and crypts that dot the front lawn, and ogle an old horse-drawn hearse, though the creature that pulls it seems to have vanished into thin air. Once inside, the attraction kicks off with the disquieting metamorphosis of the stretching room, before visitors are loaded into their doombuggies, which roll them past a variety of chilling set pieces, including an extended hallway with a floating candelabra, a corridor of rattling doors and seemingly endless ghosts (the disembodied head of Madame Leota, and a black widow bride and her pop-up spectral minions, among them). Once the ride is over, guests exit through a crypt, leaving the doombuggies behind, but not before passing by a set of mirrors that reveal they are not alone – a playful spook has decided to hitch a ride and will haunt them until they return.

But for all its enduring popularity, the creation of the Haunted Mansion was one of Disney's more challenging endeavours, and it could have turned out very differently.

"There were some unused concepts for a haunted house that did come from the studio," says Baham of the attraction's initial development. "Story man Ken Anderson developed an intricate plot for a proposed haunted attraction that would feature a climax in which visitors would run into an encounter with the Headless Horsemen, which was from Disney's *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*."

Other influences on the popular attraction included the Mickey Mouse short *The Lonesome Ghosts*, which cast Mickey, Goofy and Donald Duck as ghost exterminators who travel to a house to rid it of its ethereal inhabitants, and the animation sequence featuring Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain" from the movie *Fantasia*, during which the demon Chernobog rises from the titular mountain and summons all manner of ghosts and demons from the surrounding cemeteries to worship him.

"Most of Ken's ideas for story scenes that people would walk up to, observe, and then move on were cut, because they required a group to pause for each major set piece," explains Baham. "Scenes like this were left on the drawing board once it was determined that the attraction would need to be a ride, requiring the gags to be standing scenes that could be grasped upon a momentary viewing."

This decision set the ball rolling for the attraction we know today. The outside façade, resembling an old-fashioned Southern plantation manor house, was built in 1963 in the newest area of California's Disneyland, called New Orleans Square. It sat alone and abandoned on the banks of the river for several years, with a sign outside advertising the opening of a retirement home for ghosts and spirits that were being collected from all over the world. However, the reason why it didn't open until six years later lies very much in the corporeal realm.

"The main problem was Walt's death, before the attraction was completed," notes Baham. "But going back a few years prior to that, the 1964-65 World's Fair took most of the efforts of Walt's theme park design division."

But even while the mansion ride was put on hold, the looming house on the hill continued to inspire the wild imaginations of Disneyland patrons.

"People spoke of the attraction remaining closed so long because it was too scary, or that it took so long to open because it had literally scared some test audience members to death."

While none of these stories were true, they added to the Haunted Mansion's mystique. After the World's Fair, things were back on track for the designers, at least until creative differences brought work on the attraction to a halt once more.

"After the World's Fair, [character artist] Marc Davis joined the team, and he viewed the attraction as goofy, almost jovial, but some of the original team, who remember watching horror films for inspiration and had been working on truly eerie special effects, didn't necessarily see it that way," says Baham.

Davis wasn't the only new member of the team though. Layout and background artist Claude Coats, with whom Davis had worked on the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction was also brought over, and the duo's views on the tone of the ride differed greatly.

While Davis believed that ghosts were scary enough and that the attraction should be much more humorous and filled with wacky characters, Coats sided with the original crew. He believed that people would have certain expectations when they entered a place called the Haunted Mansion, so he felt that the ride should be much more sinister and frightening. ("You could say that, without Walt there to help guide the process along to the finish, there was a bit of conflict regarding whether or not the final attraction would be genuinely creepy, or simply *Addams Family*-style ooky," says Baham.)

In the end, the mansion was split into two distinct sections. The first half of the ride is very much the Coats portion. Everything is atmospheric and ominous, with hardly a character in sight. Statues move, paintings change before your eyes, and a door appears to be breathing (a reference to the 1963 film *The Haunting*). The second portion of the ride is more in line with the work of Davis, with its plentiful characters and witty sight gags. The graveyard, in particular, is home to some of the more memorable personalities, such as the singing busts and the famed hitchhiking ghosts.

Many of these boneyard denizens were brought to life by master illusionist Yale Gracey, who was charged with finding a way to create phantoms in an era long before digital effects.

"Gracey [was responsible for many of the] notable special effects that are commonly referenced by Haunted Mansion visitors, like the singing busts, the talking head in a crystal ball, and the show-stopping disappearing and reappearing translucent ghosts hosting a birthday party in the ballroom," says Baham. He adds that Gracey populated the mansion using lighting tricks and old theatre techniques such as Pepper's Ghost, an illusion that manipulates the transparent reflections of the animatronic spirits via a large piece of glass. So large, in fact, that it covers the whole length of the ballroom.

To further enrich the atmosphere, show writer X. Atencio and composer Buddy Baker collaborated on the theme song for the attraction, called "Grim Grinning Ghosts (The Screaming Song)." Various versions of the tune can be heard throughout the ride, beginning with a funeral dirge in the foyer, a wedding waltz in the ballroom and a final swinging jazz number in the graveyard, where all of the ghosts have assembled for a wake. Many of the instruments were actually recorded playing the song backwards so that when the track was reversed the music would sound unearthly.

Photos © Disney



Spook Show: (Clockwise from top left) "Illusionized" spectres dine in the ballroom, riders in a doombuggy check out the Mansion's holiday overlay, and the "Tea Party Ghosts" gathered around a hearse

With all those pieces in place, the doors were finally opened on August 9, 1969, and tourists from all over the world couldn't wait to see what dwelt within. The attraction proved to be an instant success and it wasn't long before it spread to Disney parks in other parts of the world.

An almost-exact duplicate was already built and installed at the soon-to-open Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. This incarnation debuted in 1971, and would feature a few additional rooms, as well as an entirely new facade based on a Dutch colonial design. In 1983, Tokyo Disneyland opened and with it another Haunted Mansion, a replica of the one in Florida.

No further incarnations of the attraction would be built for nearly a decade later, when a new park opened in Paris, in 1992. Euro Disneyland, or Disneyland Paris as it is now known, became home to an entirely different iteration of Disney's classic haunted house: Phantom Manor, a whole new experience specifically designed for the European market.

"Generally, Walt Disney Imagineering tried to adjust the attraction culturally, as the jokey dark humour may not have translated well to an international audience," says Baham.

Drawing inspiration from many European gothic classics such as Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*, the Disney team crafted a story of a loving bride, a wealthy father and a booming gold-rush town that was destroyed by a terrible earthquake. This concept was carried throughout the entire area of the park, a western-themed section known as Frontierland. As a result, the ride had a much darker tone, and many of the iconic scenes were changed to suit the new atmosphere.

The soundtrack was also re-recorded to be much more operatic and sinister. And while original narration for the manor was recorded by Vincent Price, it was scrapped shortly after the grand opening when it was determined that French-language narration would be more appropriate. It was subsequently re-recorded by Gérard Chevalier, a voice actor who had done French overdubs for several of Price's movies. However, Price's iconic laugh remains the cackle of the evil Phantom.

Yet another incarnation of the attraction arrived in 2001, when the Haunted Mansion Holiday was introduced at Disneyland as a temporary redesign for the Halloween and Christmas seasons.

"The idea for developing a holiday overlay can be attributed to Walt Disney Entertainment Creative Director Steven Davison, who, in Disney press releases from the time, called the notion of overhauling the Mansion a 'crazy idea.' So crazy, in fact, that it took us over three years to get a go-ahead on the project,'" says Baham.

It brought Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* together with the Haunted Mansion to create a one-of-a-kind experience for the holidays. Davison utilized the popular stop-motion film as the guide for the seasonal re-envisioning, which has the film's animated star, Jack Skellington, bringing his special brand of Christmas to Disneyland. The entire mansion is revamped as new things are added and some classic icons replaced. The singing busts are swapped out with singing pumpkins, the ballroom is given a giant Christmas tree and a haunted gingerbread house, and the graveyard is covered in a blanket of ghostly white snow.

"Of course, there are Disneyland purists who feel that the Haunted Mansion experience is lessened by adding the overlay, but the overwhelming majority of fans are thrilled with the results – largely because there is such a large crossover between fans of the ride and fans of Tim Burton's film," says Baham.

Like the mansion itself, which is constantly evolving, another key aspect that never seems to stop growing is the number of visitors who line up each day to experience the ride. And for the most diehard of devotees, there are regular releases of new tie-in merchandise and massive fan events celebrating the anniversaries of the attractions' various worldwide openings.

"Disneyland knows that there is a dedicated fan base for the Haunted Mansion in particular, so they keep the attraction in the forefront of their marketing activities," says Baham. "For example, in 2004, the park auctioned off the right to call yourself the Haunted Mansion's '1000th Ghost,' and a tombstone with the winner's name was installed inside of the attraction. The bragging rights sold for over $37,000, all of which was donated to a local charity."

So what's next for the mansion and its ghostly residents? Well, it may just be heading back to the big screen. While a so-so movie featuring the spooky abode and starring Eddie Murphy was released in 2003, Guillermo del Toro has been attached to a new film based on the attraction. Baham is optimistic for this new onscreen version, explaining, "Couldn't be in better hands! Based on del Toro's past work, I suspect the Haunted Mansion fans will be much happier with whatever he comes up with."

The first major attraction completed after Walt Disney's death, the Haunted Mansion is a tribute of sorts to the undying spirit of his imagination and the mark he left on the world. Now hurry in, though you may require a death certificate if you plan to stick around.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY...

He's Back! He's Bad! And he's a DAD!

Belial, everyone's favorite beast-in-a-basket, is back in this sensational third film in the wildly macabre horror series. After being separated again from his conjoined twin brother Duane (Kevin Van Hentenryck), Belial finds out he's going to be a deformed daddy! Mrs. Belial ("Eve") delivers a litter of bouncing baby monsters, but the blessed event turns into a nightmarish ordeal when the police kidnap the little critters. Attacking the cops in a climactic, gory rampage, everyone's favorite mutant mauler stops at nothing to get his newborns back!

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October 9, 2012



Synapse-Films.com

WHEN IT COMES TO SCARING THE HELL OUT OF AN AUDIENCE, THE MAKERS OF **PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4** KNOW THAT THE SECRET LIES IN THE *NORMAL*



HAUNTED REALITY

by DAVE ALEXANDER

IF YOU'RE FED UP WITH HORROR CHARACTERS THAT ARE AS PURTY AS PHOTOSHOPPED MAGAZINE MODELS AND JUST AS LACKING IN DIMENSION, SETTINGS THAT ARE MORE MUSIC VIDEO THAN REAL LIFE, AND TRAILERS THAT GIVE AWAY THE ENTIRE GODDAMN PLOT OF THE MOVIE, THE MAKERS OF THE *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY* FILMS FEEL YOU.

Over the course of the franchise, they've taken unknown actors who look like real folks, used a found-footage style to capture them in average-looking suburban homes, and created a mythology surrounding an unseen demon that's terrorizing two sisters – Katie (Katie Featherston) and Kristi (Sprague Greydon) – and their families.

"When it's a found-footage movie, we are going for a sense of something that feels really authentic, almost like a documentary," says creator Oren Peli, who wrote and directed the first *Paranormal Activity* and has guided the subsequent installments as producer and co-writer. "Sometimes it's easier to connect with characters if it's someone that you don't know, so you think, 'Oh, this could be my neighbour or my friend or my buddy from college.' If it's someone you've seen in twenty movies before, you know it's an actor playing a role."

Using a voyeuristic aesthetic with slow-burn chills and well-placed jump-scares, *Paranormal Activity* was a massive hit when it dropped in 2009, resulting in a sequel every October since. Extending the less-is-more technique to the marketing, Peli has tightly controlled the film's publicity to ensure very little info is released ahead of time, almost nothing is spoiled in the trailers and no beans are spilled during interviews.

What we do know, from the trailer and tidbits of plot info online, is that *PA4* is a direct sequel to *PA2* (*PA3* took a step back in the timeline to explore the origins of the haunting), which saw Katie possessed by the malevolent entity before disappearing with her sister's son, Hunter, after killing his parents. Five years later, she's moved to a new suburb with Hunter (now "Robbie"), and the story unfolds from the viewpoint of their new neighbours as increasingly disturbing events take place.

Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman – who were chosen to direct *PA3*, and then *4*, after Peli and his co-producers saw *Catfish*, their creepy social network-themed documentary (accused by many of being cleverly faked) – are just as tight-lipped as Peli about this latest installment, but explain how they fit into the world of *Paranormal Activity*.

"It turns out the *PA* team had been watching *Catfish* a lot," says Schulman. "During the making of *PA2*, they'd been using it as sort of a [template] for dramatic home video. After *PA* it was just Oren, and they had this really small crew, so they had to bring a filmmaking team into it."

Joost adds that because of *Catfish* they understood the series' vérité aesthetic. "I think the frightening thing about the *PA* movies is how normal the setting is. We really tried, with the production designer, to make a house that felt like your buddy's house that you went over to to have sleepovers."

The directors explain that Peli watches the dailies to ensure the footage feels authentic.

"Oren's kind of the godfather of this franchise," says Joost. "At this point, he makes sure that the mythology is correct and makes sense. He has a really, really finely tuned eye for what he feels is an authentic reaction or an inauthentic reaction."

Peli notes that he also tries to avoid current gimmicks, such as opening the films with a "stinger" to force action into the film in the first scene.

"I think if you look at movies like *Paranormal Activity*, for example, or *The Blair Witch Project*, these movies prove that you can actually have a very simple, linear style and you don't have to do this stinger at the beginning. I think it helps to give the story some credibility and some authenticity; it slowly sucks you in and gets you invested, and gets you to know the characters as real people before things escalate."

Of course, audiences won't know exactly what they're in for until Paramount opens *Paranormal Activity 4* on October 19. That said, you can bet your ouija board the filmmakers will once again use that cinema vérité vibe to place you right in the middle of a suburban spookshow.

As Schulman says, "The best part is that it's all about identifying your own deep-seated fears, so you need very little to prove the paranormal in that."



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TO THE DEVIL A SLAUGHTER

SOLOMON KANE

Starring James Purefoy, Pete Postlethwaite and Jason Flemyng
Written and directed by Michael J. Bassett
Radius/The Weinstein Company

Nearly three years after its debut at the Toronto International Film Festival, and a well-received theatrical run in the UK, Michael J. Bassett's adaptation of author Robert E. Howard's puritan tough guy story is getting a proper North American release (in limited theatres and via VOD). Was it worth the wait? To use the appropriate vernacular: Aye. 'Tis verily.



In 17th-century England, former mercenary/privateer Solomon Kane (James Purefoy) has attempted to leave behind his evil ways and become a self-proclaimed man of peace. Not so easy when Malachi, an evil sorcerer (Jason Flemyng), has England in the grip of dark magic, his armies slaughtering or "converting" every innocent villager in their paths. Reluctantly, Kane takes up the blade and musket and returns to the business he knows best: violence and bloodshed. Now a man on a mission, he travels across the country destroying witches, vampires, possessed soldiers and one big ass demon in order to rescue a young farm girl, fulfilling a promise he swore to her dying father (the late Pete Postlethwaite).

While Bassett has taken some liberties with Howard's source material (notably Kane's back story) the essence is 100 percent two-fisted pulp action. From the creature and set design to the score and cinematography, *Solomon Kane* evokes the heyday of '80s sword-and-sorcery epics, as well as paying sizeable tribute to vintage Hammer films (specifically, *Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter*), using modern technology to create an epic and immersive world.

None of this would work, though, if the film didn't have Purefoy to sell it – his Kane is the epitome of a pulp hero: stoic, violent and singular in purpose. In one of the film's best scenes, Kane, tempted for the last time to take up the sword, looks to the heavens and asks, "Is this all I am to you?" It's equally tragic and badass, from then on, he's all ruthless strut and lethal swagger.

If you're looking for an adventure with a dash of the macabre and the supernatural, *Solomon Kane* is the most faithful and reverential adaptation of Howard's work to ever hit the screen.

RON MCKENZIE

THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

THE POSSESSION

Starring Natasha Calis, Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Kyra Sedgwick
Directed by Ole Bornedal
Written by Juliet Snowden and Stiles White
Alliance

After *The Possession*, it's time to put a moratorium on opening supernatural horror flicks with a "based on a true story" credit. If anyone actually considers a film in which an MRI machine captures a picture of a demon inside a little girl as something close to reality, then the genre and movies in general are in trouble.

Ole Bornedal's (*Nightwatch*) latest Hollywood production may be the most pitiful stab at imitating *The Exorcist* to date. The only change to the formula is that this concerns a Jewish demon (or *dibbuk*) – and the total failure to understand or represent that culture accurately proves just how tacked on that lonely new idea was.

The story follows a recently divorced couple (Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Kyra Sedgwick) and their almost indistinguishable daughters (Natasha Calis and Madison Davenport). Daddy is a bit of a deadbeat, but he tries. After surprising the girls with a new house, he takes them to a yard sale where the youngest girl is inexplicably attracted to a creepy old box. She insists on buying it, spends every moment clutching it, and somehow neither parent is that concerned when she starts speaking in a deep raspy

voice around it. They do get concerned, however, when her eyes start rolling back into her head, she feasts on raw meat (somehow acquired from a fridge stocked by vegetarians) and psychically extracts Mommy's new boyfriend's teeth. Even though he isn't a member of the faith, Daddy somehow figures out that his little girl is possessed by a Jewish demon, hires a rabbi, and the film ends like all exorcism movies must (hint: with an exorcism).



As this ludicrous plot suggests, *The Possession* is an absolutely awful concoction of genre clichés, with acting and writing so bad it induces belly laughs. As the PG-13 rating guarantees, the frights are non-existent, limited to bland CGI nasties or mistimed jump-scares. Semi-slick production values are all that kept this thing from going direct-to-DVD and, even then, only a mercifully brief theatrical run will delay that craptacular destiny. An absolutely terrible horror movie that will leave you wondering what possessed Sam Raimi to produce it.

PHIL BROWN

DADDY REAR-EST

FATHER'S DAY

Starring Adam Brooks, Conor Sweeney and Matthew Kennedy
Written and directed by Adam Brooks, Jeremy Gillespie, Matthew Kennedy, et. al.
Troma

The Fuchman cometh! It's true, out now on home video, finally, is the wildly entertaining and cleverly subversive no-budget homage to home video from the five-man Canadian filmmaking collective known as Astron-6: *Father's Day* (*RM#120*).

The plot is crazy, but there's a great story amidst the chaos. In the prologue, notorious serial rapist Chris Fuchman (Mackenzie Murdock) sodomizes, guts and cannibalizes the latest in a long line of victims with one common link – they're all dads. Ahab (Adam Brooks) teams up with a male prostitute nicknamed Twink (Conor Sweeney) and a priest (Matthew Kennedy) to kill Fuchman again, and even follows him into Hell after discovering he's an actual demon.



Hitting a flurry of notes perfectly, *Father's Day* is the Yngwie Malmsteen of exploitation throwbacks. There are overt references to specific genre films, such as *Thriller: A Cruel Picture* (1974), and FX artist Steven Kostanski's stop-motion animation could have been easily lifted from any of Charles Band's Full Moon pictures. Yet lurking beneath the veneer of copious gore, slime, boobs and deadpan performances in this sublime parody is a surprising emotional depth. Homophobia is quietly confronted in Twink's relationship with his father, for example.

Whatever the public falling-out with Astron-6 (as covered in the upcoming documentary *No Sleep, No Surrender*), Troma is no villain in regard to this four-disc limited edition release. There are superb presentations of *Father's Day* on both Blu-ray and DVD, a second DVD crammed with extras, including two brief deleted scenes, the original fake *Father's Day* trailer that sparked Troma's interest, a second, longer trailer that is quite different from the finished film, a television spot, a behind-the-scenes slideshow, two special effects demos, and a tutorial on poster design.

Also included is a featurette with footage from the world premiere at the Alamo Drafthouse in Austin, Texas, and screenings in London, England, and Nice, France, a second featurette with Lloyd Kaufman and the five members of Astron-6 at the 2D1D Rue Morgue Festival of Fear in Toronto, a look at our cover story from *RM#120*, two hilarious Astron-6 shorts, *Lazer Ghosts* and *Cool Guys*, and a completely gratuitous nude pictorial. The fourth disc is a CD featuring a number of the original, exquisitely cheesy '80s synth pop-styled songs used in the soundtrack.

Yet, there's no commentary in sight. Still, hail the Fuchmanicus!

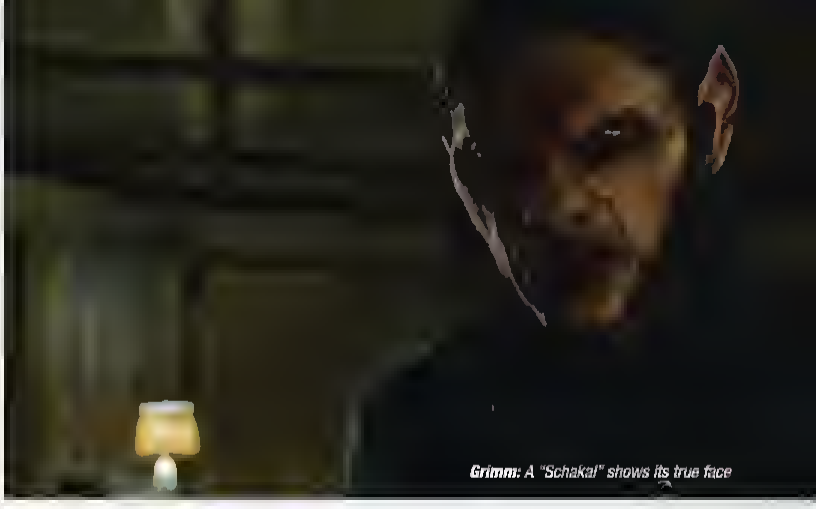
THE GORE-MET

WARY TALE

GRIMM: SEASON ONE

Starring David Giuntoli, Silas Weir Mitchell and Bitsie Tulloch
Directed by Norberto Barba, David Solomon, Holly Dale, et al.
Written by Stephen Carpenter, David Greenwalt, Jim Kouf, et al.
Universal

If the 2011–2012 television season is to be believed, when ideas run thin for genre shows and all the popular go-to monsters have been played out (or already have a home on prime time), then fairy tales will be mined. And why not? Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected all manner of creepy creatures and conniving yarns of treachery in their 19th-century volumes of German folk tales.


Grimm: A "Schakal" shows its true face

This is precisely where *Grimm* takes its – admittedly loose – inspiration from. In the world of the show, the Grimms (and their descendents) are monster hunters, not simply cultural researchers and lauded storytellers. Homicide detective Nick Burkhardt (David Giuntoli) is just the latest in a long line of Grimms, something he doesn't learn until he starts seeing the animalistic faces of Wesen (supernaturals) beneath people's human ones. Unlike his ancestors, however, Nick can't simply hunt down and eradicate Wesen, as he quickly realizes that not all are bad, some are just trying to live out their lives in peace. Never mind that he's a cop – bound to serve and protect. Nick ultimately gets some help untangling this monstrous world that lies just beneath our own from his aunt's secret trailer full of monster-hunter paraphernalia and books of lore, and from a Wesen named Monroe (Silas Weir Mitchell), whom he befriends and frequently coaxes into dangerous missions.



Grimm got off to a wobbly start, suffering from a serious dearth of female characters, and a monster-of-the-week premise that seemed reluctant to develop its over-arching mythos too quickly out of the gate. While the show's cleverly designed and ingeniously filmed – via a combination of practical and computer effects – supernatural beasties provide ample baddies for Nick to hunt, things feel seriously underdeveloped until about mid-season when those aforementioned shortcomings are addressed narratively, after which *Grimm* rallies before ending on a particularly strong cliff-hanger.

The extras included in this season one box are serviceable but disappointing considering the sheer amount of mythology and back story that had to be developed in order to populate the show's Wesen world. A pair of featurettes does give fans some in-



Screaming In High Heels: (L to R) Brinke Stevens, Linnea Quigley and Michelle Bauer clear their lungs

sight into the creators' heads and the FX used to make the monsters, and there are also deleted scenes and audition tapes, but no commentaries and no additional world-building (as nge tor it as this may be). Still, *Grimm*'s made fairy tales more grown-up (and bitey!) than they've been in decades.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

THE GREAT WHITE HOPE

BAIT

Starring Phoebe Tonkin, Julian McMahon and Xavier Samuel
Directed by Kimble Rendall
Written by John Kim and Russell Mulcahy
Anchor Bay



Although it's not an original concept, especially considering we've all likely seen plenty of hybrid horror films by now, this blend of one part tsunami, two parts shark still has teeth.

With an ensemble cast including Julian McMahon (TV's *Nip/Tuck*), Xavier Samuel (*The Loved Ones*), Alex Russell (*Chronicle*) and Dan Wyllie (*Romper Stomper*, *Chopper*), the fun begins in a grocery store, where a robbery is foiled by a tsunami that tears apart the supermarket and brings with it two great white sharks. Like a modern *When the Reins Came*, the survivors must band together to endure nature's wrath, fighting each other (and the sharks, of course) along the way.

Director Kimble Rendall, better known as one of the founding members of Aussie band Hoodoo Gurus, has only helmed one other feature, *Cut* (2000), starring Molly Ringwald. *Bait* – which was co-written by *Razorback* director Russell Mulcahy – is fast-paced and full of inventive gore gags. After a tacked-on prologue setting up a weird *Jaws 4*-style revenge subplot, *Bait* moves at a pretty steady clip once the gilled killing machines show up. The gruesome deaths include one victim getting chomped in half while suspended from the ceiling, and the old grabbing-onto-an-arm-with-no-one-attached-to-the-other-end gag. Though there's an overabundance of CG, the digital effects are mixed pretty well with the practical ones.

By the time you read this, *Bait* may have come to a theatre near you in 3-D, though I didn't notice anything in my 2-D screener version that seemed to exploit the format, which means the process was either used in a clever manner or as an afterthought. For what it's worth, *Bait* is one the best shark films made after *Jaws 2*, and it's nice to see the bloodthirsty predators wreaking havoc outside of the Discovery Channel for a change.

PATRICK DOLAN

RETURN OF THE HORROR HOTTIES

SCREAMING IN HIGH HEELS: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SCREAM QUEEN ERA

Starring Michelle Bauer, Linnea Quigley and Brinke Stevens
Written and directed by Jason Paul Collum
Breaking Glass

Well, who knew Brinke Stevens had a Master's degree in marine biology? Not I, and that ain't the half of it.

Back in *RM#40*, I gave a generally positive review to indie filmmaker Jason Paul Collum's *Something to Scream About*, an entertaining if somewhat scattershot documentary on scream queens. My only caveat was that his definition of the term was a little too flexible, and while his newest effort covers some of the same ground to the point of redundancy, it's a superior film mainly because it's much more tightly focused. This time, Collum concentrates on the careers – and to a lesser degree, the personal lives – of 1980s B-movie goddesses Brinke Stevens, Linnea Quigley and Michelle Bauer. In the process, he also presents a smart and affectionate study of the sea change that took place in low-rent genre film during the twilight of the drive-in era and the earliest days of the home video boom. All three women are charming, articulate and insightful, in sharp contrast to the stereotypes film snobs would associate with models-turned-actresses who spent most of their careers getting naked and being killed with power tools. The filmmaker has also corralled veteran B-directors including Fred Olen Ray and David DeCoteau to bring some interesting additional historical perspective, and Collum – who clearly knows this territory well – provides some interesting commentary of his own.



The proceedings are marred only slightly toward the end when the women speak with thinly disguised disdain about the actresses who followed in their footsteps, but they manage not to go overboard. If you've already seen *Something to Scream About*, then yes, there is some repetition here, but this is far and away the better of the two docs, and well worth a watch.

JOHN W. BOWEN



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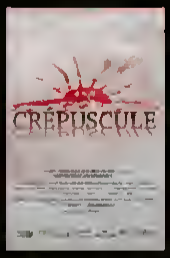
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ABBREVIATED TERRORS

SHORT FILMS REVIEWED

BY PATRICK DOLAN

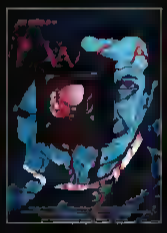


CRÉPUSCULE

20 minutes

crepusculefilm.blogspot.ca

On first impression, *Crépuscule* seems like the bastard son of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, but actually ends up being a far darker and more brutal tale (think a deranged Brothers Quay outing rather than anything Tim Burton or Henry Selick have released into the world). This nightmarish stop-motion animation piece is centred upon a group of creatures that look like tattered angels, who discover a human couple copulating in their Garden-of-Eden-like forest. As these soulless husks become increasingly obsessed with the alien beings, their peeping turns to touching and their touching into a truly horrific conclusion to the atmospheric tale. Let's hope this is only a hint of what darkness is to come from director Eric Falardeau.

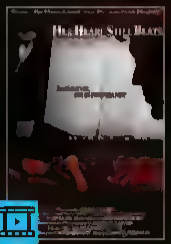


PWCA

9 minutes

Facebook (search "PWCA film")

Adopting a familiar "found footage" aesthetic, this horror hoax by goremeister Jesus MagGof initially appears to be a tired copping from *The Blair Witch Project*, but eventually gives birth to a hell of a lot more gore. Although their eyes are set on bigger and better things, a news reporter and cameraman team begrudgingly visit a mad doctor and his crazy cult, which believes abortions are the key to unleashing a special power within human beings. As you may have guessed, things go a little sour for the innocent newsies. The unhinged soliloquies of the depraved doctor, the insane energy of the cult members, the horrifying outcome of the reporter's investigation and allusions to the pwca (pronounced pooka, a goblin of Irish folklore) all work together to make a gory goulash of terse terror. So take a coat hanger to your expectations and allow PWCA to impregnate your mind.



HER HEART STILL BEATS

25 minutes

creepykidproductions.com

As proven in this retelling of "The Tell-Tale Heart," adapting Edgar Allan Poe for a modern setting can be awkward. With the chilling source material's high-concept subject matter (a man becomes violently insane over something that, once quelled, comes back to haunt him), this handsome high-def video shocker takes some strange turns. Although the tale itself could play as-is in contemporary times, the script still retains a lot of the evocative and moody language of the original text, which, coming from the mouths of people in the 2010s, sounds just plain silly if anyone could sell this anachronistic film, however, it's definitely lead actor Fiore Leo, who plays the murderous husband with a vigorous commitment that leaps beyond hamminess to utter mastery of his craft. Despite Leo's talent, though, *Her Heart Still Beats* has a pretty weak pulse.

BLOOD BUDDIES

THE REVENANT

Starring Dave Anders, Louise Griffiths and Chris Wylde
Written and directed by D. Kerry Prior
Lightning Entertainment

Death really is only the beginning. When Second Lieutenant Bart Gregory makes the supreme sacrifice for his country in Iraq, his best friend Joey is devastated. A few weeks later, however, Joey gets the shock of his life when Bart turns up at his apartment one night looking decidedly worse for the wear – due to a bad case of still being dead. Joey's efforts to learn more about his friend's condition lead to the discovery that his pal is now a "revenant" – a reanimated corpse that isn't quite vampire or zombie. Inanimate during the day, Bart needs a steady diet of blood in order to prevent himself from decomposing. This presents both he and Joey with the ethical dilemma of where to get a regular supply of human blood, until a violent confrontation with a thug at a gas station seems to provide the ideal solution, as well as a guilt-free snack. The duo consequently become vigilantes, cleaning up scumbags from the streets of LA – and for a while, the arrangement seems to work. But the "dark gift" of life after death proves to be a double-edged sword...



The Revenant is a solid buddy comedy with plenty of gross-out humour and two well-rounded, interesting lead characters. But it doesn't quite go far enough in hitting the emotional notes that elevate movies such as *Shaun of the Dead* above the shuffling, resurrected crowd; as soon as we're treated to a glimpse of the two lead characters' vulnerabilities, writer/director D. Kerry Prior throws in another gag to deflect the emotional resonance – a scene in which Bart and Joey get into an argument and end up futilely firing guns at each other is a case in point. Ultimately, it's not a movie without flaws – the subway shootout scene, for example, is just asinine – but it is a highly entertaining and well-made piece, with an original spin on the undead. And these days, that's something.

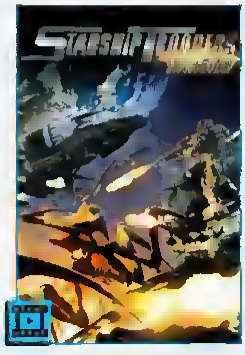
CLAIRE HORSNELL

THIS BUG'S FOR YOU

STARSHIP TROOPERS: INVASION

Starring Leraldo Anzaldua, Luci Christian and Melissa Davis
Directed by Shinji Aramaki
Written by Flint Dille
Sony

Back in 1997, Robert Heinlein's 1959 classic science fiction novel *Starship Troopers* was finally adapted for the big screen by Paul Verhoeven, its success inevitably (and unfortunately) spawned a couple of lacklustre sequels and an animated series that never quite measured up to the original. Well, that's changed.



Set ten years after the events of the first film, this animated follow-up reunites some of the original characters including Johnny Rico, Carl Jenkins and Carmen Ibanez (with new actors performing their voices) when a massive starship is hijacked by smart bugs and set on a collision course with Earth, where the creepy crawlies'll be able to begin an insect invasion. In response, General Rico sends in a group of elite soldiers whose mission is to regain control of the starship and rescue any of the crew that haven't had their brains sucked out.

Helmed by veteran anime director Shinji Aramaki, who cut his teeth on classics such as *Metal*

A. MICHAEL BALDWIN
STAR OF
PHANTASM

ALAN HOWARTH
CO-COMPOSER OF
HALLOWEEN

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OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE DIES A LITTLE WITH THE DEAD

SWORD 'N' SORCERY



DEADTIME

Brain Damage Films

Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Led Zeppelin – just three of many bands rumoured to have sold their souls for rock 'n' roll. And why not? Surely it's Satan and not the combined genius of a few talented musicians... At least this is the case for a down-on-its-luck British group struggling to make it big again after its latest album flopped. Sequestered in a derelict studio to film a new promo video, the band members and their groupies start getting whacked by a mysterious killer armed with a medieval sword. Though it suffers from poor acting and some bad CGI gore, *DeadTime* is filled with more naked babes, spraying blood and decapitations than an R-rated episode of *Metalocalypse*. Bring on that devil music!

BODY COUNT: 10

BEST DEATH: Pool cue through the head while on the toilet

GHOST WRITERS



DREAMS OF THE DEAD

R-Squared Films

The DVD box promises "an erotic haunting," so I figured this would be my kinda ghost story. Though it starts out promisingly enough, with a flashback to 1902, when a psychopath brutally kills two of his servant girls, *Dreams of the Dead* changes gears to follow a lame all-girl band that holes up in the majestic mansion where the killings took place so they can write songs. The place may be haunted but that only amounts to a television turning on by itself, a doll's head moving and a half-naked ghost chick prancing around in her panties. Seriously, you could watch this film, or you could watch paint dry: the choice is yours, but I recommend a nice glossy, vinyl-acrylic latex.

BODY COUNT: 3

BEST DEATH: Beaten to death with a cane

CARTOON VIOLENCE



WHERE THE DEAD GO TO DIE

MVD Entertainment Group

Some of you pity me for the multiple visual torments that I constantly subject myself to – but just know that I do it all to spare you the pain. For example, take this sick animated offering from a dude named Jimmy ScreamerClauz. Set up as an anthology, it features three stories that'll have you retching from their grotesque plots, not to mention crude 3-D computer-generated imagery. Each story features a talking dog that leads the children of a demented neighbourhood through their lives of sexual and physical abuse while spouting lines such as "Your testicles are filled with the tears of God." With images of torture, child pornography, bestiality and drug abuse, *Where the Dead Go to Die* makes *A Serbian Film* look like a Saturday morning cartoon. You're welcome!

BODY COUNT: 14

BEST DEATH: Dick chewed off by a dog!

Skin Panic Madox-01 and *Appleseed*, this movie looks and feels so much like one of the better animated video games out there (i.e., *Resident Evil* or *Halo*), you might find yourself reaching for your control pad and getting ready to jump into the tray.

And there really is a shitload of action in this film, with lots of blood and gore as various expendable troopers are hacked and slashed, as well as gallons of goo from billions of bugs being blown to bits. There's also a surprising amount of nudity so you may want to screen it before showing it to your little troopers.

Starship Troopers: Invasion is proof that the franchise still has a pulse. One thing's for sure, citizens: this ain't just another damn bug hunt!

LAST CHANCE LANCE

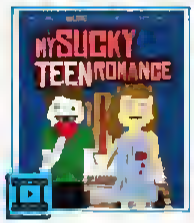
YOUR BODY IS CHANGING

MY SUCKY TEEN ROMANCE

Starring Devin Bonnée, Tina Rodriguez and Lauren Lee
Written and directed by Emily Hagins
Dark Sky

A cinematic love child of the Disney Channel, nerd culture and vampire romance, this parody tells a tale of adolescent undead love from a teenager's point of view.

In hopes of finding boys on a weekend trip to "Space-Con" (bad idea), Kate falls for a freshly turned fanger, cleverly dressed in a costume to hide his vampirism, who bites her in a fit of awkward teenage passion, and passes on the dark gift. At a geek festival, where vampire knowledge is in surplus, Kate and her pals must find a way to bring both her and her new friend with the pointy cuspids back to the living.



With three other fright films on her resumé, nineteen-year-old writer/director Emily Hagins still has a lot of growing up to do, film-wise. Coming off more like a play, this stagnant horror-comedy is really just a series of talking head scenes. Dialogue consisting of references to comic books and movies, dealing with being a teen and explaining every plot point in full detail (imagine a *Buffy* episode penned by Kevin Smith) really drags down the pace of this 77-minute movie. Consistently flat, bright lighting also tends to make much of the film rather uninteresting to look at. A good lesson in cinema language could really go a long way for Ms. Hagins.

The spelled-out and over-simplified plot initially seems to point to a pre-adolescent target audience but there are some pretty bloody scenes spattered throughout (not to mention an undeniably funny dream sequence with flying body parts) that may be a little inappropriate for some youngsters – imagine a far less crass class trip to Tromaville.

The depiction of *My Sucky Teen Romance*'s nerdy protagonists as sort-of-misunderstood rebels (one redheaded character, in particular, comes off as a cross between Louis Tripp in *The Gate* and one of *The Lost Boys*' Frog brothers) goes to show Hagins' heart is in the right place, even if her filmmaking chops are a little off. Of course, far worse movies have been created by directors more than twice her age, so it's really impressive that the only thing sucky about this is the titular teen romance. I just wish there was more to sink my teeth into.

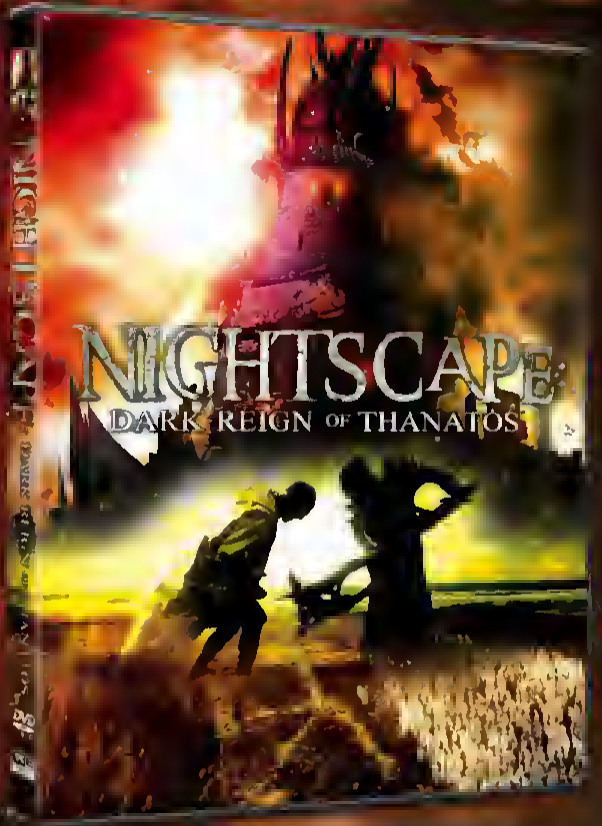
PATRICK DOLAN

ENTER A DOMAIN WHERE STRANGE IS NORMAL



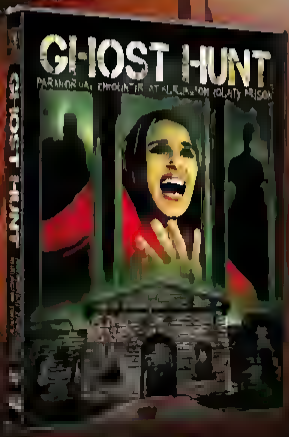
FUTURE WORLD: CITY OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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AWESOME MAGAZINE

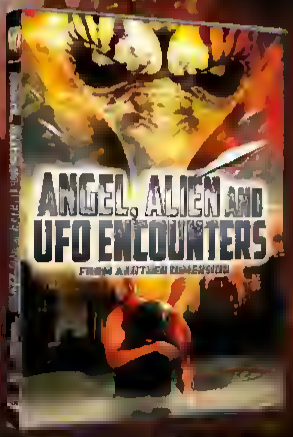


NIGHTSCAPE: DARK REIGN OF THANATOS

"LORD OF THE RINGS IN THE MODERN ERA"
MINDSCAPE



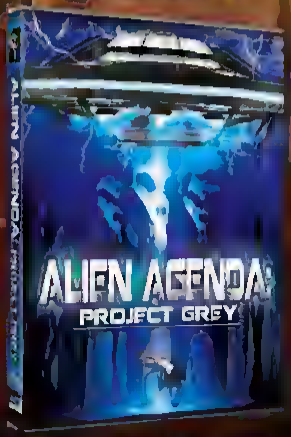
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LIKE KILLER LIKE SON

By STUART F. ANDREWS

JENNIFER CHAMBERS LYNCH FIGHTS FOR A DIRECTOR'S CUT OF CHAINED, HER DISTURBING CHARACTER STUDY OF A SERIAL KILLER AND HIS YOUNG PROTEGE

DESPITE BEING THE DAUGHTER OF DAVID LYNCH, JENNIFER CHAMBERS LYNCH HASN'T HAD A PARTICULARLY SMOOTH RIDE THROUGH THE MOVIE BUSINESS. SHE MADE HER FIRST FILM IN 1993 AT the tender age of 25 – the deliciously twisted fairy tale allegory *Boxing Helena*. Unfortunately, it was tragically misunderstood, plagued by controversy, despised by critics and even denounced by women's groups. It would be fifteen years before she returned to feature filmmaking with the festival hit *Surveillance* in 2008. She followed that up with the disastrous Bollywood/Hollywood horror mutation *Hisss* (2010), which saw her lose final cut to the Indian producers (a situation well documented in the fascinating upcoming documentary *Despite the Gods*).



With her most recent project, *Chained*, Lynch continues to court controversy. The film was slapped with an NC-17 rating, forcing her to shave off a few frames to appease the MPAA. In addition, she had to cut some of the film's most quietly effective and devastating moments for the benefit of nervous distributors.

"That's why I wanna do a director's cut!" she declares to *Rue Morgue* after the world premiere of *Chained* at Montreal's FanTasia Film Festival this past July. "I mean, I'm begging. Begging openly."

Shot amidst the desolate plains and big skies of Saskatchewan, the film stars the brilliant Vincent D'Onofrio (pictured) as a lumbering serial killer named Bob who kidnaps a young boy (whom he nicknames "Rabbit") and keeps him chained in an isolated farmhouse for years, with virtually no contact with the outside world. As Rabbit grows up, Bob attempts to train his reluctant protege in the nefarious craft of kidnapping and murdering young women.

Originally brought onto the project as a director-for-hire, Lynch was given license to do a "page one pass" on an original script by Damian D'Donnell. She devised some variations on the source material, including keeping the action completely focused on the events at the house and limited purely to the subjective world of Rabbit.

"The script they sent me was incredibly violent and moreover included cops chasing this guy over a ten-year period," explains Lynch. "Obviously, the story he wrote was what the producers fell in love with and I wanted to be true to that because I think it's a great premise. I also thought that there was nothing interesting in it to me if I couldn't actually know who these people were and really look at them, so I didn't want to be outside the house with the detectives."

The result is a fascinating study of a father/son relationship steeped in disorienting moral ambiguities. As monstrous as Bob is, in his own deranged way he's trying to be as conscientious a father as he possibly can.

"It was really important to me to have him be a real human being and not just this one-dimensional creep who killed women. He does what he does for a reason and he also thinks that children should be taught certain things. I don't want sympathy for Bob but I want to explain why he is the way he is."

The performances from both the younger and older versions of Rabbit are fantastic (Evan Bird and Eamon Farren, respectively) but D'Onofrio is especially mesmerizing. He delivers a meticulously constructed, unsettling turn as Bob, completely inhabiting the disordered brain and body of the character.

"Vincent and I made some decisions about Bob but I just kept going back to 'he's a real guy and that broken child is still inside him.' We talked a lot about how heavy Bob's body was to him and that he moved very well in it when he needed to but that the way he walked was weighed down and beaten. Then Vincent thought that a slight speech impediment would be great so he – on his own budget – had his dentist make him a little device that was just a little lisp thing he had to sort of force his way through. We had to keep him awful but we also had to, every once in a while, see what had happened to him."

Even though there is hardly any explicit gore in *Chained*, Lynch's version was given the dreaded NC-17 rating.

"We went and arbitrated that decision," she notes. "I was really hoping to, if nothing else, bring to their attention the fact that they were openly saying if, say, you cut a girl's breasts off and make it funny or sexy, kids can see that. It just doesn't make any sense to me. It goes against everything I think is valuable in life and in storytelling. I really think that they're not willing to deal with the fact that we don't talk about violence as a bad fucking thing. We talk about it like it's funny or sexy and it makes people money. Talking about violence as violence doesn't make anybody any money."

The R-rated version of *Chained* is out on DVD and Blu-ray October 2 through Anchor Bay. As of press time, there's no word of a director's cut.



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ANIMATED AND REANIMATED

By MONICA S. KUEBLER

PARANORMAN

Starring Kodi Smit-McPhee, Tucker Albrizzi and Anna Kendrick
Directed by Chris Butler and Sam Fell
Written by Chris Butler
Alliance

Grade-schooler Norman Babcock sees dead people. Problem is, no one, not even his own family, believes him.

Until now, he's managed well enough. Sure, he's a chronically bullied, misunderstood misfit, but it's not the end of the world – yet. But it could be soon. That's because Norman's hometown of Blithe Hollow is cursed, and unless a very specific ritual is carried out once each year at the witch's grave, all hell will literally break loose in the tiny burg. And now that Norman's crazy uncle (John Goodman) has passed away, he's the only person capable of completing the task. Assuming, of course, he can sneak out of the house, avoid the vengeful bullies hot on his tail and find the witch's grave in time. Needless to say, nothing goes quite as planned.



Animated in the same stop-motion style as 2009's *Coraline*, *ParaNorman* – the first of three spooky animated genre features hitting theatres this year, along with *Hotel Transylvania* and Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* – is an absolute treat. From the meticulously crafted, creepy zombies to the swirling green wafts of ghosts, the 3-D is subtle and stylish, saturating the movie with the same scary-fun vibe that makes Halloween so awesome. At times, it even dares to get surprisingly dark for a PG-rated tale. Yet, by the end, when the overstated moral is trotted out for the kiddies and the monsters all turn out to be just as misunderstood as Norman, there's no denying who the target audience is.

While this denouement may prove a bit too treacly for some, unless you are utterly soulless you'll already have found much to love by this point in the film, whether it be Norman battling the effects of rigor mortis to get his deceased uncle to unhand an important book or the naive exuberance of Norman's rotund wannabe best friend, Neil.

The laughs come as fast as the (mostly tame) scares here and, as in the best films of this ilk (think *The Nightmare Before Christmas*), are often born from the creepy moments themselves (i.e., that rigor mortis wrestling match). Finally, a kiddie genre outing to which parents can take their bolls and ghouls and come out feeling nostalgic rather than meraly childish.

HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA

Starring Adam Sandler, Selena Gomez and Steve Buscemi
Directed by Genndy Tartakovsky
Written by Peter Baynham and Robert Smigel
Columbia

While *ParaNorman* places us firmly with the humans, *Hotel Transylvania* flips the perceived threat by inviting audiences to a monster-sized (and -filled) party, thrown in honour of Dracula's daughter's 118th birthday.

Mavis (Selena Gomez), the curious and outgoing young vampire in question, has spent her entire extended childhood sequestered away by her overprotective father (a surprisingly reserved Adam Sandler), who built Hotel Transylvania as a refuge for monsters after his wife was killed by a fire-wielding, monster-hating human mob.

All his hard work threatens to come crashing down, however, on the eve of the party when a human hitchhiker named Jonathan (Andy Samberg) stumbles across the hotel and refuses to leave, even after discovering it's packed with honest-to-goodness monsters, including riffs on almost all of our Universal faves. Given the circumstances, Drac does the best he can, attempting to disguise the young man as Frankie's (a.k.a. Frankenstein's) cousin so that his monstrous clientele won't think their safety has been compromised. (In this world, humans are the baddies in bedtime stories.) Of course, this only feeds the slapstick, comedy-of-errors plot, with Mavis believing Jonathan is a monster and falling for him, which leads to Dracula's increasingly desperate attempts to get rid of the kid without killing him, because that's *not what monsters do anymore*.



Despite being 3-D, the animation is flatter and more cartoonish than that of *ParaNorman*, but it works, given the playful tone (while done with the utmost respect, the monsters are played almost solely for laughs). Not all of the jokes work – the obligatory *Twilight* gag, for instance, is old and overdone – but the destructive, ever-growing litter of disobedient werewolf pups is downright hysterical, as are several of the sight gags that play off of Frankie's inherent destructibility (for easy shipping!).

More heartwarming than spooky, the moment the monsters discover that humans actually really, really love them will bring a smile to the face of even the most hardened horror fans, making this another perfect gateway for introducing your little monsters to the classic creatures that shaped us.

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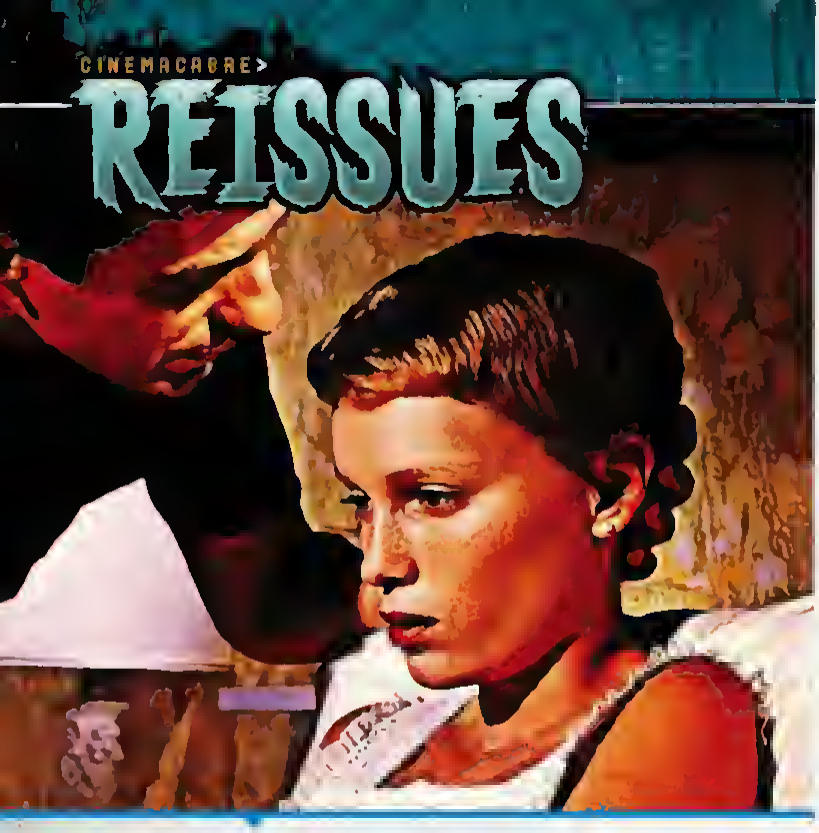
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REISSUES



BIRTH RITE

ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes and Ruth Gordon
Directed by Roman Polanski
Written by Ira Levin and Roman Polanski
Criterion

Hail Criterion! The highly respected boutique label has finally answered fans' prayers for a special edition of *Rosemary's Baby*, a landmark horror film that helped change the direction of scary movies forever. Along with *Night of the Living Dead* (released that same year), Roman Polanski's Hollywood debut reinvigorated the themes of horror cinema's past with a modern edge, creating a mix of occult paranoia and dark comedy that is still influencing films today.

Mia Farrow is captivating as Rosemary, the fresh-faced wife of struggling actor Guy (John Cassavetes), who moves into a spacious New York City apartment to start a family. While Guy becomes fast friends with eccentric elderly neighbours Roman and Minnie Castevet (Sidney Blackmer and Ruth Gordon), Rosemary is uneasy in their presence, especially once they learn that she is pregnant. Plagued by weird dreams, she gradually becomes obsessed with the idea that the kindly pensioners are actually witches that have recruited Guy into a satanic plot to steal her baby.



As *Psycho* had done almost a decade earlier, *Rosemary's Baby* significantly shook up the film industry's entire approach to the genre. Drawing on the Cold War-era paranoia of films such as *Village of the Damned*, the dreamy uncertainty of *Carnival of Souls* and the dark occultism that bubbled up in several of Val Lewton's 1940s productions, the film reframed these fears within a far more personal family sphere and offered a Freudian spin on female psychosis. Aside from the satanic horror boom of the '70s, it would be hard to imagine films such as *The Wicker Man* or even *Suspiria* existing without it.

Criterion has done the film proud and decked out this digitally restored edition with a new 45-minute documentary, featuring interviews with Polanski, Farrow and producer Robert Evans. It also includes a radio interview with author Ira Levin, upon whose book the film was based, and a feature-length doc on its soundtrack's composer Krzysztof Komeda. It's a fitting tribute to not just one of the finest horror films of the 1960s, but a cultural milestone that represents the evolution of modern horror cinema.

PAUL CORUPE

BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

RE-ANIMATOR (1985) Blu-ray

Starring Bruce Abbott, Jeffrey Combs and Barbara Crampton
Directed by Stuart Gordon
Written by Dennis Paoli, William J. Norris and Stuart Gordon
Paradox



Nineteen eighty-five was a banner year for zombies. After the earnest thrills of *Day of the Dead* and the gruesome belly laughs of *Return of the Living Dead*, along came *Re-Animator* – Stuart Gordon's audacious goulash of demented comedy and riotous gore that established its director as a provocative new talent.

Based loosely on a series of wry sketches by H.P. Lovecraft, *Re-Animator* is the story of Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott), a medical student at Miskatonic University, who becomes embroiled in the illicit experiments of his precocious lodger, Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs) – much to the dismay of his girlfriend Meg (Barbara Crampton). Herbert develops a glowing reagent that resurrects the dead – with the unfortunate side effect of rendering them deranged zombies. Events soon spiral out of control as Miskatonic's duplicitous Dr. Hill (David Gale) attempts to claim Herbert's serum as his own. Unwilling to surrender his discovery, Herbert kills – and then quickly reanimates – Hill's decapitated head, leading to unbridled mayhem, including oral sex from a severed head!

A lively riff on the Frankenstein theme, *Re-Animator* remains one of the pivotal "splatstick" movies of the '80s. Its lean narrative is a model of economy, but is not without nuance (namely the seething battle between Herbert and Meg for Dan's soul) as it gallops breathlessly towards an outrageous climax.

Paradox's Blu-ray presents *Re-Animator* in a newly remastered HD transfer that intensifies every inch of mottled flesh but was, peculiarly, supervised by producer Brian Yuzna without Gordon's involvement. Another caveat may be the scarcity of any new bonus material, although all of the special features from previous DVD editions (which are numerous) have been ported over, including the exhaustive 70-minute doc *Re-Animator Resurrectus*, featuring interviews with all the key contributors (save for Gale, who died in 1991).

Whether this latest release will tempt fans into ponying up their dough is debatable, but one thing is certain: *Re-Animator* still feels like a breath of fetid air as intoxicating as it was more than a quarter century ago.

MICHAEL OOYLE

GRIM PEEPERS

DEATH WATCH (1980) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Romy Schneider, Harvey Keitel and Harry Dean Stanton
Directed by Bertrand Tavernier
Written by David Compton, David Rayfiel, Bertrand Tavernier and Géza von Radvanyi
Shout! Factory

An unfairly neglected, remarkably prescient gem of dark sci-fi, *Death Watch* finds new life in its first North



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Twins Of Evil: Puritans prepare the witch roast.

American release since its appearance on VHS and LaserDisc.

The film is centred around a television cameraman, Roddy (Harvey Keitel), who has had cameras surgically implanted in his eyes, so that whatever he sees is documented forever. His innocent enthusiasm for his "new toy" leads him into a morally conflicted position: he is assigned to befriend and surreptitiously film the proud, dying Katherine (Romy Schneider) for a reality TV show. She thinks Roddy is helping to protect her from the camera's all-seeing eye, when in actuality he is doing the opposite – a betrayal that becomes increasingly difficult as his feelings for his subject evolve.



Shot in Glasgow by French filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier, *Death Watch* boasts not only a terrific cast – which also includes Harry Dean Stanton and the excellent Max von Sydow – but also a number of firsts: it's the first film for Scottish character actor Robbie Coltrane (*From Hell*, the *Harry Potter* franchise); it was the first film to predict the rise of reality TV, and it may also be the first time that someone says "fuck you" to a personal computer onscreen.

Tavernier reportedly went out of his way to avoid emphasizing the creepier aspects of the story, such as the surgical procedure that gives Roddy his photo-peepers, society's morbid fascination with death, or Roddy's voyeurism (which is presented as more naïve and ego-driven than perverse and fetishistic), but the ideas at work are still rich, unsettling and very Cronenbergian. The critique of reality TV's inherent cynicism is not only prophetic but also fairly damning, and Roddy's "solution" to his inner conflict is accomplished with great pathos.

Shout! Factory's DVD/Blu-ray combo is free of extras, but looks superb, and restores thirteen minutes cut from all previous North American versions of the film. Some of those changes are insignificant, but the alterations made to the ending will shock viewers encountering the European cut for the first time. *Death Watch* fans on this side of the pond have likely only seen a tamed version of the film. Finally, this unsettling body-mod movie comes fully into focus.

ALLAN MACINNIS

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

TWINS OF EVIL (1971) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Peter Cushing, Damien Thomas, and Mary and Madeleine Collinson
Directed by John Hough
Written by Tudor Gates
Synapse

After releasing Hammer's fangtastic gothic fairy tale *Vampire Circus* a couple of years back, Synapse has now unearthed *Twins of Evil*, another of the studio's underrated classics. In it, Peter Cushing stars as Gustav Weil, the head of a fanatical group of witch-hunting puritans called "The Brotherhood," which terrorizes the European countryside by embarking upon nightly excursions to find suspected sorcerers (read: innocent young women) and burn the Devil out of them.

But Weil soon has more formidable threats to worry about after his orphaned twin nieces, Maria and Frieda (former Playboy Playmates Mary and Madeleine Collinson) arrive from Vienna, and the more rebellious of the two, Frieda, takes a fancy to vampiric nobleman Count Karnstein (Damien Thomas), who lives in a neighbouring castle. Weil must then attempt to end a spree of vampire attacks and redeem himself of his former actions by seeking the assistance of local schoolteacher Anton (David Warbeck, *The Beyond*), who has knowledge of how to dispatch the bloodsuckers.

The third and last entry in Hammer's "Karnstein" series, which began with 1970's *The Vampire Lovers* and was followed by 1971's *Lust for a Vampire*, *Twins* relies less on nudity and the lesbian vampire angle featured in the previous two films, and more on a style similar to then-recent efforts such as *Witchfinder General* and *Blood on Satan's Claw*. But like its predecessors, *Twins* upholds a grim, cruel atmosphere (mainly due to the sequences of screaming young women being burned alive) not evident in Hammer's other offerings.



Cushing gives one of his best performances and his shockingly gaunt appearance in the film (attributed to his state of health following his wife's passing) only intensifies his depiction of the well-meaning but tortured and highly flawed Weil. The Collinson twins – though lovely to look at – will never be accused of being thespians, though they do exude the perfect air of naïveté and sultry wickedness in their respective roles, especially given that their voices were dubbed (due to heavy Maltese accents). Adding to the film is the steady direction of John Hough (*The Legend of Hell House*), sumptuous costumes and set design, and a rousing score by Harry Robinson, (who now goes by Harry Robertson).

Twins is presented in a gorgeous Blu-ray/DVD combo pack that includes great extras exclusive to this release, including a highly entertaining feature-length making-of documentary, trailers, a deleted scene, plus a props-related featurette strictly on the Blu-ray. Kudos to Synapse for another must-have release.

JAMES BURRELL







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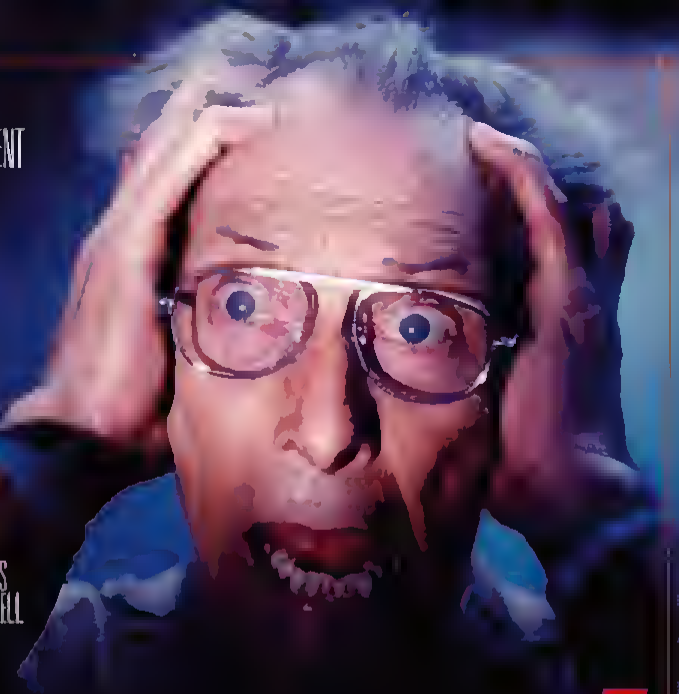
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A GOTH BAND FAMILY TREE
AND 13 GOTH PLACES TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE

Hammer's foray into televisual horror gets a DVD reissue, showing a different side of the legendary studio's output

Terror for the Telly

By James Burrell



From the late 1950s to early 1972, Britain's Hammer Films was the pre-eminent name in cinematic gothic horror, renowned worldwide for its cycle of Dracula and Frankenstein films starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. But after releasing an adaptation of Dennis Wheatley's occult thriller *To the Devil – a Daughter* in 1976, the studio did not enter genre territory again until 1980, when it partnered with Chips Productions, Cinema Arts International and ITC Entertainment to create the television series *Hammer House of Horror*.

Consisting of thirteen 51-minute episodes, the series eschews the gothic trappings of Hammer's earlier costume melodramas. Instead of vampires and man-made monstrous creations (though there is one werewolf-themed episode), the show featured a witch, a murderous voodoo doll, a homicidal femme fatale, malevolent doppelgängers, cannibals, a revenge-seeking ghost, Satanists and a former WWII Nazi doctor who, despite the passing of time, hasn't stopped his evil experimentation.

In spite of the different tone, the series does feature familiar Hammer luminaries such as actors Cushing and Jon Finch (*The Vampire Lovers*), and directors Alan Gibson (*Dracula A.D. 1972*), Robert Young (*Vampire Circus*) and Peter Sasdy (*Taste the Blood of Dracula, Countess Dracula*). And like the company's films, the series contains sex, nudity and some fairly graphic gore – surprising, given the medium.



Long out of print, *Hammer House of Horror* is now out as a five-disc DVD set from Synapse Films, complete with introductions from genre writer/historian Shane M. Dallmann and interviews with actresses Kathryn Leigh Scott (TV's *Dark Shadows*) and Mia Nadasi. Though the majority of the installments are highly entertaining, well-acted excursions into the macabre, here are five standouts.

"Charlie Boy"

After his uncle dies in a tragic accident, Graham (Leigh Lawson) inherits a collection of valuable art, which includes a wooden African fetish figure, christened "Charlie Boy" by his girlfriend, Sarah (Angela Bruce). Though the couple are informed by an antiques dealer that the carving is actually a powerful, ancient voodoo doll, they dismiss his claims and mock the figure, repeatedly stabbing a knife into it. Soon, various friends and family members begin dying in bizarre ways. Can Graham and Sarah undo the curse they've unleashed before they become the next victims? Several inventive, gory deaths and a highly suspenseful finale make this particularly memorable.

"The House That Bled To Death"

William Peters (Nicholas Ball), his wife, Emma (Rachel Davies), and young daughter, Sophie (Emma Ridley), move into a house that was once the scene of a grisly murder. Soon after settling in, the family is witness to several ghastly occurrences, including the reappearance of said crime's murder weapon (a huge knife), blood dripping from walls and the gruesome death of Sophie's cat. In an attempt to move on, the couple throws a birthday party for the little girl, however, what happens at the event will forever alter their lives. Great shock sequences, including one featuring geysers of the red stuff, will have you wondering how this particular installment was even allowed to air.

"The Silent Scream"

Newly released from prison, Chuck (Bnan Cox) is offered a job in a pet shop by kindly old Martin Blueck (Peter Cushing, pictured above), who had been visiting him in jail. Blueck has to take a trip and asks the former thief to take care of the exotic animals – which include a tiger, panther, baboon and bear – that he keeps caged in the basement of his shop. Chuck accepts the offer, but when he gives in to temptation and tries to rob the store's safe, he gets much more than he bargained for. As always, Cushing is excellent, and it's great to see Cox in an early performance. A clever, disturbing twist ending tops this one off.

"The Two Faces Of Evil"

While on a holiday drive, Janet (Anna Calder-Marshall), her husband (Gary Raymond) and son (Paul Hawkins) pick up a strange, seemingly mute hitchhiker in a yellow raincoat and hat – only to have him attack them and cause their car to crash. After awakening in the hospital, Janet finds that her husband cannot speak and his right hand has a long, black, claw-like fingernail – eerily similar to that of her family's assailant. A great performance by Calder-Marshall and a palpable sense of dread throughout make this a truly unnerving entry.

"The Thirteenth Reunion"

Journalist Ruth Cairns (Julia Foster) is sent to cover the unorthodox techniques of a new weight loss clinic. She befriends one of the clients, Ben (Warren Clarke), who later takes a diet drug that causes him to hallucinate and crash his car. While investigating his death, Ruth discovers that not only is this not the first such tragedy, but that the bodies are being used for a sickening purpose. Delicious dark humour abounds – the finale will leave a nasty taste in your mouth for days.


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THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: Going Underground

by Paul Corupe



These days, cable television may seem like the last place to explore the strange and wonderful world of genre cinema, but Turner Classic Movies' *TCM Underground* has risen as an essential spotlight for films you probably won't see anywhere else. Set to launch its seventh season on October 24, with a screening of the documentary *Spine Tingler: The William Castle Story*, followed by Castle's own 1958 chiller *Macabre*, the smartly curated Friday night mainstay has evolved from presenting the accepted canon of genre touchstones to helping to expand the modern definition of cult film.

"I love that *TCM Underground* is this totally separate portion of the TCM schedule," says assistant programming manager Millie De Chirico, who helped create the show and now handles all of the acquisitions. "You know every Friday night there's going to be weird or different stuff until daylight. That experience is what I really like."

In the tradition of Universal's packaging of its ghoulish classic horror films for TV in the 1950s, De Chirico says the idea for the show was sparked when she met Eric Weber, who worked in TCM's marketing department at the time.

"We were both fans of horror hosts like Elvira and Svengoolie, as well as USA Network's *Night Flight* and *Up All Night* showcases," she says. "That's where you would find all the weird stuff."

TCM Underground launched its first season in 2006 with a strong emphasis on classic horror and cult selections – the first double bill was *Plan 9 from Outer Space* and *Bride of the Monster*. Although De Chirico still programs at least one night of classic cult selections each season, she notes that many of those films have since seeped into TCM's regular programming schedule.

"In our first year, we [showed] *Spider Baby*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Carnival of Souls* and other classic horror stuff. But when *Freaks* plays at 10 a.m. on a weekday and Martin Scorsese is hosting a weekend of Val Lewton films, I have to look elsewhere."

Although Weber left the network in 2007 and original onscreen host Rob Zombie split partway through the show's first season, *TCM Underground* remains an important source of vintage genre films. From *Blood Freak* to William Castle's bizarre dancing-corpse film *Shanks* and, more recently, entries such as *Ganja and Hess* and *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, De Chirico continues to make daring programming choices, occasionally even delivering classic horror films that are completely unavailable on home video.

"When programming *TCM Underground*, it's always a matter of what we can license and what looks good," she explains, adding that most picks are recommended by cult-savvy friends or the result of browsing the libraries of associated studios. "You have to play detective sometimes to figure out who has the TV rights, but it's fun to go down the rabbit hole, where I think there's no way we can show something and then it all works out."

De Chirico notes that, because TCM is a commercial-free network, she generally has more freedom than programmers for other channels or even revival theatres, the model for which *TCM Underground* often resembles.

"With a theatre, you have to think about getting people through the door – the Alamo Drafthouse and the New Beverly have devoted fans and lines go out the door for stuff," she says. "At TCM, we don't get the same immediate feedback, which is why we're good about social media and our message boards – these are our only ways to know whether people liked or hated a film."

Though much of the feedback she receives is positive, De Chirico notes that certain film picks, such as *Little Darlings* and Lawrence Dane's campy *Flashdance* rip-off *Heavenly Bodies*, have surprised regular viewers expecting more typical genre thrills.

"Sometimes I hear things like, 'You should not be showing that, you need to be showing [Alejandro] Jodorowsky!'" she says, laughing. "But what can you do? You gotta play everything you can."

While the show's eclectic choices continue to make *TCM Underground* an influential and important source of offbeat films, De Chirico says she's just happy if the show can stay true to its horror host roots.

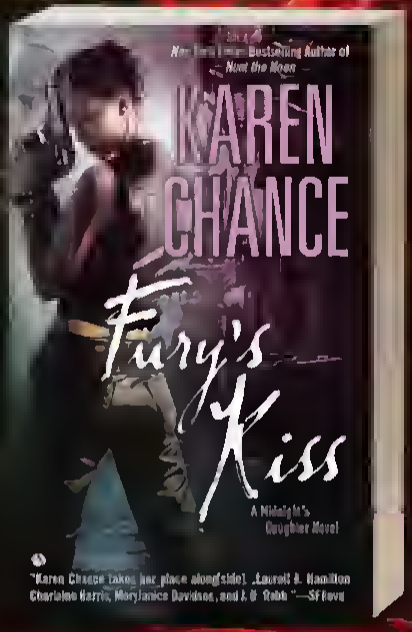
"My biggest ambition for *TCM Underground* would be that people come home late at night from a bar and turn it on, and they're kinda drunk and they say, 'What is this?!' If that's all the show is for people, then that's totally great." 💀

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IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

R DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Mr. Tobe's Wild Ride

by John W. Bowen



Who are your celebrity birthday buds? Come on, we've all got 'em. Each September 14, I party down – though not necessarily in person – with Sam Neill, the late Amy Winehouse, surf guitar god Dick Dale and (*wait for it, readers, wait for it*) Wayne Doba. Yeah, you read that right. Wayne Muthafuckin' Doba. The guy who played the horribly disfigured, homicidal yet vaguely sympathetic monster in Tobe Hooper's 1981 dead teen test *The Funhouse*. Said tick finally drops on DVD and Blu-ray this month, just as untold scores of fall fairs make their annual clink-and-rumble pilgrimage from town to small town all over Canada and the US, each travelling with at least one battered, rickety, raggedy-ass old haunted house ride.

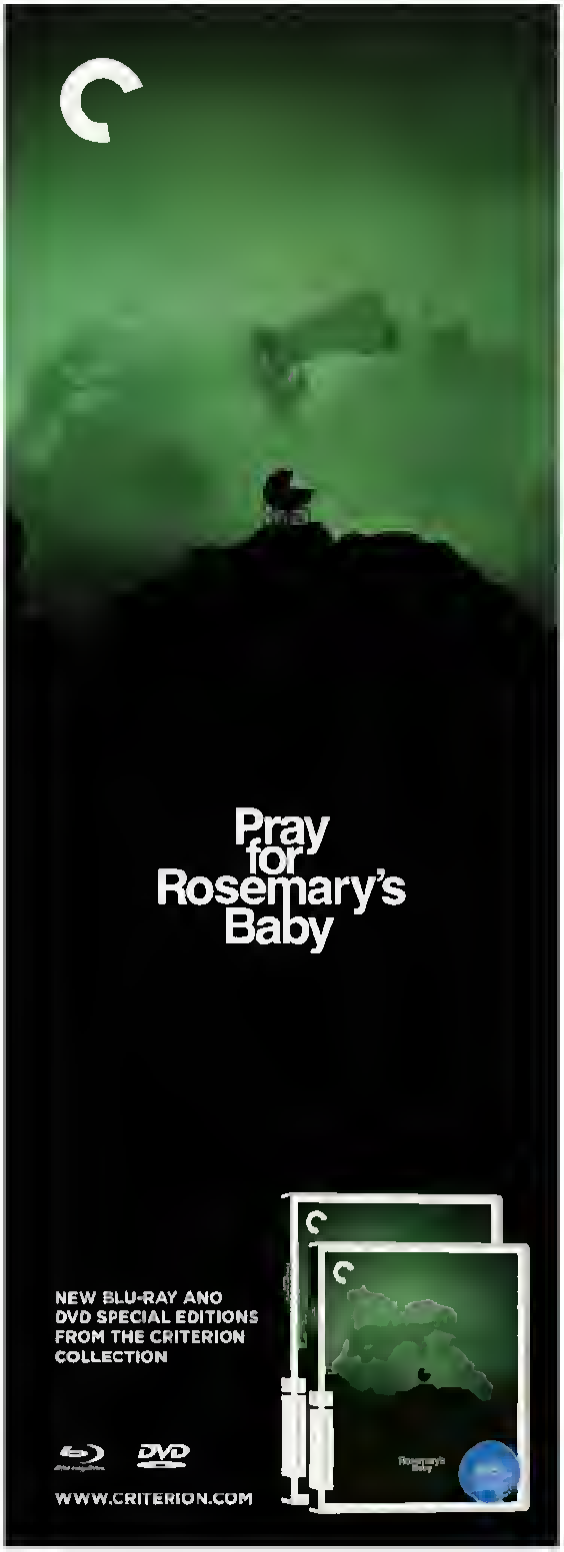
My affection for these wonky spookshows has endured since childhood. Along with the merry-go-round, the Ferris wheel and a few other midway staples, the basic design of haunted house rides has changed very little over the decades, safety measures have improved and the sound effects now involve digital triggers instead of tape loops, but otherwise, when your car takes that first lurch forward into the dark, you might as well be slipping into the mid-1960s. Truth be told, I've never ridden any of the bigger, more elaborate types you find at permanent amusement parks; I'd love to, but my experience so far remains limited to the portable tractor-trailer models that return to Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition at the end of each summer and the considerably lower-fi Kingston Fair in my hometown a few weeks later. I've always loved the giddy, disorienting sensation of lurching around in these noisy, decrepit old carriages in the dark, and while the cheesy, Day-Glo animatronic displays never disturbed me beyond the jump-scare level (even as a child), there was always the lurking fantasy that maybe this time someone or something else was in there. And maybe – this time – I wouldn't make it out alive, and wouldn't be reported missing until long after the fair had left town, and wouldn't that be cool? Naturally, this was the main reason *The Funhouse* – with the tagline "Pay to get in, pray to get out!" – struck such a deep, dark chord with me from the get-go.



No horror filmmaker has gone back to the haunted house so many times in so many different ways as Hooper, and yet he's never made an entirely typical haunted house film. The domiciles have been old (*Salem's Lot*) and new (*Poltergeist*), they've ranged from a skanky bayou inn in *Eaten Alive* to a charming Hollywood hotel-turned-apartment building in *Toolbox Murders*. He's also equally comfortable haunting these spaces with evil spirits and human monsters, usually with a seemingly normal person doing the bidding of something evil that lurks beyond the threshold. With this in mind, *The Funhouse* may be far from a perfect film, but it's certainly a perfect premise for Hooper: two teenaged couples attending a county fair decide it would be a spiffing good wheeze to hide out in the corridors of the haunted house ride after it shuts down for the night, unaware that it's also the after-hours lair of a monstrous, murderous sideshow freak (Doba). As Hooper's oeuvre goes, *The Funhouse* is rarely mentioned in the same breath as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and, truth be told, it doesn't deserve to be. It also ranks well below *Salem's Lot*, *Poltergeist* or his latter-day triumph, *Toolbox Murders*, but I'll never shake it off, nor would I want to. It's an example of how a painfully mundane script can be forced to rise above itself by one of the most talented directors our beloved genre has ever known.

Shout! Factory's DVD and Blu-ray reissue will feature audio commentary with Hooper, hosted by writer/filmmaker Tim Sullivan, interviews with producer Mark Lester, character actor Kevin Conway (who was particularly memorable as a skeezy carnival barker with a secret connection to the monster), composer John Beal, and more.

Finally, I can't conclude this without a belated shout-out to Nick Ferrara of Franklin Square, New York, who sent me some VHS treasures for my birthday. It was a couple of months early, but I am *so* not complaining – in fact, maybe the rest of you should get the hell out of my basement and start shopping – you only have a couple of months left to send me early Christmas presents, assuming I make it out of the haunted house ride this year.


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IN THIS ISSUE

COLDER
Paul Tobin and Juan Ferreyra
Dark Horse

THE CREEP #0 OF 5
John Arcudi and Jonathan Case
Dark Horse

GODZILLA: THE HALF CENTURY WAR #1 OF 5
James Stokoe
IDW

BEASTS OF BURDEN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
Evan Dorkin and Jill Thompson
Dark Horse

DARK SHADOWS/VAMPIRELLA #1
Marc Andreyko and Patrick Berkenkotter
Dynamite

DEBRIS #1
Kurtis J. Wiebe and Riley Rossmo
Image

BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

I have been reading comics for more than 30 years, so believe me when I tell you that there are very few images in the medium that make me do a double take anymore. Then I saw an advertisement for the upcoming Dark Horse series *Colder*.

A stunning illustration by artist Juan Ferreyra, the ad (which is also the cover of the first issue) features a man sliding a couple of fingers under the skin of his face, from his lips right up to one of his eyeballs. I stared at that picture for quite a while, determined to not only read the series when it premieres on November 7, but to find out more about the book and that genuinely haunting cover art.

"The title, *Colder*, is really the central theme," explains writer Paul Tobin. "The main character, Declan, has an odd physical condition: he's growing colder. When the series begins, he's at body temperatures far below medical possibility, far below room temperature. And if it gets to zero, it's game over. The series examines the cause and how it connects with forced ergotamine [early LSD] experiments carried out in the 1940s at the Sansid Asylum for the Insane, where Declan is now an inmate. Turns out something was awakened back then, something supernatural, something insane, and something insanely hungry."



Tackling a horror comic is a relatively new experience for Tobin, who's spent the past few years writing superhero titles for DC and Marvel. However, the lure of working on creator-owned material kept beckoning, and when Dark Horse editor Scott Allie mentioned the company's desire to push new horror material, Tobin knew he'd found a home for the gruesome concept of *Colder*.

"There are very few types of writing that don't appeal to me," says Tobin. "As long as I can deal with characters, dig into what makes them tick and how they react to the situations I throw at them, I'm good. I've been in love with horror all my life too, so it's a natural fit. I recall watching *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* when I was a kid, left alone by my parents, who came home to me cowering in the kitchen holding a knife. I was scared, but it was awesome!"

As to what horror fans can expect to see from *Colder*, Tobin plans on exploring many aspects of the genre. "We definitely go for the psychological. There's also some gore involved, like the cover for issue one, but even that is more disturbing than gory. I'm a big fan of horror movies from countries such as Japan and Korea, where suspense is king, rather than axes to the head. Both have their place, but I love that unrelenting horror where the victim is almost hoping for that axe to the head, just so the unbearable tension will end."

Once *Colder* was solicited, Tobin quickly brought Ferreyra on board, an artist with whom he enjoyed a strong collaborative relationship when the pair worked together on Dark Horse's sci-fi epic *Falling Skies*. Ferreyra says he took great pains to get the cover image just right, knowing full well it had to make a strong impact. After an initial Jekyll and Hyde-style split image was deemed not crazy enough by Allie, Ferreyra says he worked out some really disturbing images that he hasn't even shown anyone yet.

"If the police ever get in my house and see them, I'll probably be taken away!" he jokes. "But even then I felt I wasn't nailing the idea behind the story ... Paul told me the character can get into people's minds and see if they are crazy and can probably cure them. He's also crazy himself, so I thought, how would he get into his own mind and touch it to cure himself? So I literally drew him trying to touch his brain, although I don't think he actually succeeds in doing so. But that is where the fun of the image comes from – he's actually awake and trying to cure himself while causing horrible pain to himself in the process."



Colder: Madness abounds at the Sansid Asylum

Clearly Ferreyra's diligence paid off, as the artwork is one of the most shocking and arresting images to grace a comic cover in a long while. Going a little mad never looked so good.

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO

QUICK CUTS

REVIEWS BY PEDRO CABEZUELO



In this first issue of *The Creep*, private detective Oxel Karnhus suffers from acromegaly, the same disorder of the pituitary gland that disfigured actor Rondo Hatton (see p. 106), giving Oxel an appearance perceived as monstrous. When he's hired by an ex-flame to investigate the apparent suicide of her teenage son, the gumshoe must wrestle his inner demons as well as the mysterious circumstances surrounding the case. In Oxel, John Arcudi has created an instantly sympathetic character who still manages to keep the reader at arm's length. It's a bleak and disturbing story brought to life by Jonathan Case's art and his brilliant use of colour. Rich and vibrant one second, dark and muted the next, it perfectly sets the tone for the book.

This five-part miniseries is set to chronicle the story of one man, Lieutenant Ota Murakami, and his 50-year battle with Godzilla. The opening chapter takes place in 1954 and sees Murakami's first encounter with the green giant as it devastates Tokyo. *Godzilla The Half Century War* is a great book for Godzilla fans, giving us plenty of carnage – made more impactful through the eyes. While the story is fairly pedestrian, James Stokoe's art is fantastic, imbuing the pages with a manga sensibility and an astounding level of detail. You'll swear Godzilla's spines are actually lighting up as he prepares to use his fire breath. If you have yet to pick up one of IDW's *Godzilla* comics, this is the one.



I'm a sucker for animal comics, especially if cats and dogs are involved. Add ghosts, zombies and other supernatural ilk to the mix and I'm in for the long haul. This one-shot of everyone's favourite four-legged ghostbusters reprints three tales told in the *Dark Horse Presents* anthology and serves as a great primer for those unfamiliar with the series. Long-time fans will also be pleased as *Beasts of Burden: Neighborhood Watch* features a chicken-eating goblin, the tale of a dreaded basilisk, and an encounter with a flock of ghost sheep. The stories, especially the third, manage to be both cute and unsettling thanks to Jill Thompson's excellent art, which embraces the cuddlier aspects of the protagonists but pulls no punches when depicting the more horrific scenes.





Vampirella and Barnabas Collins team up to do battle with Elizabeth Bathory and Jack the Ripper – that get your attention? Of course it isn't so simple – the two vampire protagonists must first face off against each other. Cliched as it may be, it's entertaining to see the two iconic characters join up. Marc Andreyko does justice to both franchises and spices things up in *Dark Shadows/Vampirella* with the addition of werewolf Quentin Collins. Patrick Berkenkotter captures the Collins' likenesses well and manages to infuse the proceedings with plenty of energy. Time will tell if this is a tale that needed to be told, but fans of *Dark Shadows* will be especially glad to see Barnabas throw down.

In a post-apocalyptic future where a small group of survivors fight against giant mechanical snake creatures, a young girl named Maya must venture out of the safety of the village in search of desperately needed water. Can she survive the dangers beyond the safe zone? Kurtis J. Wiebe and Riley Rossmo have managed to put a new spin on the future dystopia genre by peppering the landscape with a steampunk aesthetic that immediately makes the story more than just a simple *Mad Max* clone. It also gives the various mechanical monsters a unique alien feel, which immediately gives rise to the question of their origins. In addition, there's the use of rich, bright colours, which is not what you'd expect to see in a barren wasteland, and yet it works very well here. The fate of its characters may be grim but the execution of *Debris* is fresh and vibrant.







THE NINTH CIRCLE BOOKS

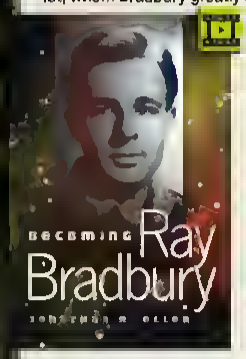
BECOMING RAY BRADBURY

Jonathan R. Eller
University of Illinois Press

As one of the 20th century's most widely lauded literary talents, much has been written about the late Ray Bradbury. Yet by choosing to frame this new biography in the context of the author's early life, Jonathan R. Eller has done a fine job of documenting the master storyteller's beginnings.

The book opens with twenty pages that flip between Bradbury's youth and his high school days, but this narrative unevenness smooths out once Eller gets to the author's rise in the sci-fi, horror and fantasy pulps of the 1940s.

While Bradbury recorded much of his own career through extensive essay and non-fiction writing, he often embellished. *Becoming* mixes academic analysis with a more objective perspective. Eller both quatifies the work, praising Bradbury's soulful flights of fancy, and cites his weakness for poetry over scientific fact, as well as his tussles with genre snobbery. He conveys Bradbury's frustration as his popular and literary work bloomed into success, with only his literary efforts garnering critical praise. At a 1951 party, for example, members of the New York City Ballet, whom Bradbury greatly admired, derided his sci-fi work as "Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon stuff."



While Bradbury undeniably exposed wider audiences to science fiction with his cautionary technological tales and universal themes of love and childhood fear, his blurring of literary and genre boundaries confounded both critics and editors of the era, as evidenced by *Weird Tales* rejecting "Homecoming" and *Harper's* accepting it. (The coming-of-age story about the supernatural Elliott family went on to win the O. Henry Award in 1947.)

Eller assesses Bradbury as more of a sprinter than a distance runner, in that he wrote cathartic first drafts in a burst, but often found revision dull. Agonizing over his debut novel, for example, the author reworked his shorter fiction into ostensibly novel-length works, including *The Martian Chronicles*, until fully developing *Fahrenheit 451*.

Appreciative Bradbury bibliophiles will find Eller's biographical eye for detail stunning. Excavating interviews and accounts from new sources, he reveals several heartbreaking yet enlightening anecdotes, such as when Bradbury's friend Grant Beach threw the scribe's typewriter into a creek after their trip to Mexico soured. However, it was that journey, which included a visit to the Guanajuato catacombs, that seeded the author's dark imagination and his future pontifications on death.

Becoming ends with director John Huston recruiting Bradbury to adapt *Moby Dick*, uprooting him to Ireland in 1953. Avid readers must wait for Eller's follow-up, *Bradbury Unbound*, which promises to cover his career up to the early 1970s. All in all, *Becoming* mines richly detailed gold about a timeless literary superstar.

JAMES K. MORAN

EUROPEAN NIGHTMARES: HORROR CINEMA IN EUROPE SINCE 1945

Patricia Allmer, David Huxley and Emily Brick, eds
Wallflower



Few books have covered the full range of European horror cinema, and *European Nightmares* is the first one to favour the academic rather than popular approach. Its contributors employ a variety of current critical methods, ranging from psychoanalysis and reception theory to historical analysis, in their studies of each country's collective horror output, as well as its individual films and directors.

The highlights include an informative essay on Belgian cinema (several of the titles mentioned will likely be new to even hardcore horror fans) and another on the reception of foreign horrors in Britain (showing a shift in attitudes towards the genre during Hammer's heyday), a good reading of the boundaries motif in *Village of the Damned* (1960) and of reactionary Catholic ideology in Paul Naschy's *Exorcismo* (1974), analysis of hard-to-find shorts by Alejandro Amenabar as precursors of his features, and an overview of Turkish horror films divided between local invention and foreign imitation.

On the other hand, one can live without forced "similarities" between zombie films and situationist-inspired "walkers," and the essay exploring the hardly illuminating clash between French writer/philosopher Gilles Deleuze and director Dario Argento. Such items are inevitable and therefore may be excused in a book of this size (276 pages), however, there are three faults that prevent this solid anthology from being excellent.

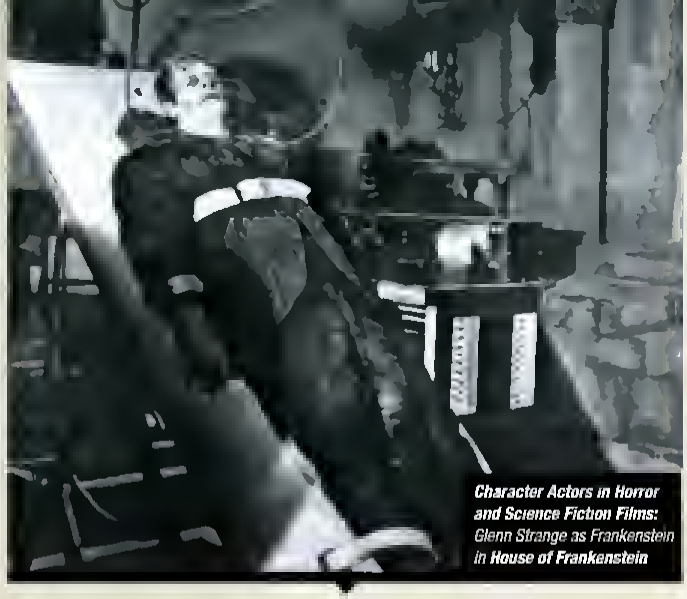
First, there is no word whatsoever on the rich traditions of Polish, Czech or Russian horror, not even a mention of recent intriguing titles such as *A Serbian Film* (2010). Instead, a single entry on Eastern Europe deals only with the non-horror fare of Emir Kustunca, Aleksei Balabanov and Bela Tarr.

Also, too many of the book's essays cover authors and films that have little to do with the horror genre (*Baise-moi*, *The Serpent's Egg* and Michael Haneke's oeuvre, for instance) or European cinema (Robert Siodmak's American thrillers).

Lastly, the most vital European horror superpowers of the last decade – France and Spain – are represented with disappointing essays on *High Tension* and *Baise-moi* (with no mention of *Inside*, *They*, *Frontier(s)*...), and we get Naschy but no Jaume Balaguero or Paco Plaza. Also, interesting horror directors such as Jorg Buttgereit, and films such as *Angst* and *Anatomy*, as well as compelling new titles from Denmark, Sweden and Norway, are discarded in favour of more talk about non-horror filmmakers (Ingmar Bergman, Siodmak, Haneke).

There is enough worthy material inside this book to merit its reading, but you might consider visiting the library instead of a bookstore for this one.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

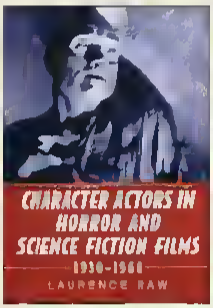


Character Actors in Horror and Science Fiction Films: *Glenn Strange as Frankenstein in* ***House of Frankenstein***

CHARACTER ACTORS IN HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION FILMS, 1930–1960

Laurence Raw
McFarland

Biographers and academics have paid close attention to the stars of classic horror and sci-fi cinema, hence the existence of multiple tomes on the likes of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. However, the supporting players of those genres have, for the most part, been relegated to the cob-webbed corners of film history. But Laurence Raw, an English teacher at Baskent University in Ankara, Turkey, shines a spotlight on these secondary but often essential players in *Character Actors in Horror and Science Fiction Films, 1930–1960*. Whether or not anyone is actually interested in such a tome is another matter.



Raw's preface and introduction warns us of his book's lack of comprehensiveness, directing readers to other biographers if they feel the need for further details on the careers of these background players. He also cops to his admittedly "liberal approach to genre," and subsequently includes several actors whose filmographies slant more towards what Raw terms "horror-noir."

These caveats aside, he does a competent job of encapsulating the careers of those actors whose faces we undoubtedly recognize but whose names often escape us. Included here are essays on genre mainstays such as Rondo Hatton (see p 106), Mantan Moreland (1942's *A-Haunting We Will Go*), Evelyn Ankers (1941's *The Wolf Man*), and Leslie Nielsen (1956's *Forbidden Planet*). But Raw also gives love to the lesser-known likes of Angelo Rossito (1941's *Spooks Run Wild*), Gloria Talbott (1960's *The Leech Woman*) and Ian Wolfe (1944's *The Invisible Man's Revenge*) – workaday actors whose performances supported our horror heroes.

Raw also admirably documents each actor's "brand identity," those facial expressions, tones of voice and physical features that made them suitable and identifiable for certain villain or hero roles (often as regulars for Hollywood's "poverty row" studio Monogram). But your interest in this work will no doubt coincide with your interest in genre ephemera. The subjects' marginality in comparison to the Hollywood mainstream makes Raw's book a specialty work.

SEAN PLUMMER

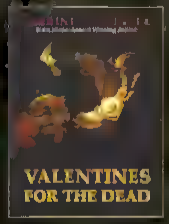
THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BODY HORROR

Paul Kane and Marie D'Regan, eds.
Robinson

The flesh is notoriously weak. If you need a reminder of how easily it is hacked away, infected, contorted or invaded by some alien other, look no further than this collection of 25 stories that explore the frailty of the human body.

The collection begins with a pair of tales by two of the horror genre's architects. Mary Shelley's

THE GRIM READER



VALENTINES FOR THE DEAD

Corrine de Winter
Shadowfall Publications

This tiny volume of vivid short stories and flash fiction from Bram Stoker Award-winning author Corrine de Winter reads like a patchwork of morbid curiosities and ethereal fantasy worlds. De Winter's succinct style and psychological depth allow her tales of mad scientists, licentious werewolves and demonic curses to make a strong emotional impact on readers in a short expanse of prose.

JESSA SOBCZUK



GETHSEMANE HALL

David Annandale
Dundurn

The twisting corridors of Gethsemane Hall, in the heart of rural England, are full of secrets – secrets that have drawn a paranormal investigator, a CIA agent, a skeptical scientist, a stage magician and a missionary to join with the house's owner, Richard Grey, to try to uncover the truth behind the ghostly goings-on once and for all. A creepy thriller with a devastating conclusion. Highly recommended.

JUSTINE WARWICK



RESTLESS IN PEACE

Meriah de la Croix
Llewellyn

Funeral director and psychic Meriah de la Croix shares supernatural encounters that she's allegedly experienced while working in various funeral homes. Stories range from creepy to touching as de la Croix describes playful ethereal children, a ghostly nun who comforts the mourning and other deceased spirit residents who continue to linger long after their bodies have left the building. A well-crafted read for skeptics and psychic investigators alike.

JESSA SOBCZUK



THE VAMPIRE COMBAT MANUAL

Roger Ma
Berkley Books

Everybody knows what they'd do in the face of a zombie apocalypse, but what if you came toe-to-toe with a vampire? After reading Roger Ma's handy guide, you'll know everything you'll need for facing the bloodthirsty undead. There's lots to digest in this deceptively slim paperback, from myths to preternatural anatomy and applicable weaponry, and a big part of the book's success lies in the fact that Ma treats it with the utmost legitimacy. Suitable for all budding Buffys and Blades.

RON MCKENZIE

SKIPP WALTZES WITH SERIAL KILLERS AND MADMEN FOR HIS LATEST MEATY ANTHOLOGY, PSYCHOS

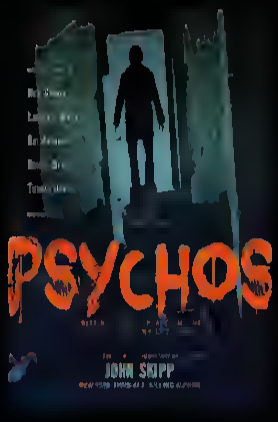
A KILLER COLLECTION



TO UNDERSTAND HOW SPLATTERPUNK AUTEUR JOHN SKIPP ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE PREMIERE ANTHOLOGISTS OF OARK LITERATURE, one must venture back into the past, beyond even his seminal 1986 novel *The Light at the End*, all the way to 1960s Milwaukee where a nine-year-old boy steeped in *Creepy* and *Eerie* comics stumbled onto the Alfred Hitchcock-curated short story collection *Stories They Wouldn't Let Me Do on TV*.

"I didn't know then [that] there were stories they wouldn't let you do on television," Skipp recalls of that first brush with Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury and Roald Dahl. "I sure as shit didn't know there were stories they wouldn't let Alfred Hitchcock do on television. It was a secret world pried open."

Now, decades later, Skipp is attempting to recapture that same revelatory spirit with his own popular anthology series. From tour de force introductions that crackle with wit and genuine insight to the sly story selection and sequencing, Skipp views his curating as an opportunity to "connect the dots across the ages." By publishing on-the-cusp writers alongside luminaries such as H.P. Lovecraft, Neil Gaiman and Charles Beaumont, this self-described "promiscuous reader" is equally at ease with everything from tales of primal viscera to gonzo absurdism.



Furthermore, Skipp considers the individual volumes – 2009's *Zombies: Encounters with the Hungry Dead*, 2010's *Werewolves and Shape Shifters: Encounters with the Beasts Within* and 2011's *Demons: Encounters with the Devil and His Minions, Fallen Angels, and the Possessed* – modules of a larger "macro-work." But he nonetheless recognizes the bright line dividing past supernatural anthologies, and new collection *Psychos: Serial Killers, Depraved Madmen, and the Criminally Insane* (out now from Black Dog & Leventhal), a literary mirror in which the fiends within bear more than a passing resemblance to us.

"We wouldn't be telling these stories if crazy fuckers weren't killing people – and if we ourselves weren't periodically turning into those crazy fuckers," Skipp muses. "We wouldn't need monster stories at all. That we do have those stories suggests they're kind of important. And as much fun as they can be, I do think this is serious business."

Insanity, Skipp avers, is "a relative thing," ranging from "harmless oddball activities like collecting stamps all the way to, you know, harvesting skulls." Difficult to diagnose, seemingly impossible to cure, what pours forth from the endless fount of madness continues to baffle and terrify us even as our fictional ruminations on the subject become richer and less hackneyed.

"Evidently, in the olden days, it was standard practice to reveal your 'crazy' characters by having them suddenly break down in lunatic laughter," Skipp says. "All at once, they'd go from normal to panting, sweaty, bug-eyed cartoon villainy. Even good writers did it. ... The nice thing about our culture of shameless confession is that we've gotten a lot more honest about how crazy our minds are. Just as our best modern actors give far more naturalistic performances than the showy theatrics of yesteryear, today's best writers bring far more believable [spiritual understanding] of abnormal psychology to bear."

Which is to say, for Skipp's anthology, psychotic pickings were not slim. *Psychos* covers substantial schizoid ground with old-school landmarks such as Robert Bloch's "Lucy Comes to Stay," Ray Bradbury's "The Small Assassin" and Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" – the latter chosen because "it set the template for hunting people as sport!" These classics rub elbows with modern fare courtesy of such well-known torchbearers as Jack Ketchum, Joe R. Lansdale and David J. Schow, as well as a slew of up-and-coming creep merchants. The thematic arc of *Psychos* is grand enough to accommodate both historical horrorist Jim Shepard's account of 15th-century psychopath Gilles de Rais and the requisite excerpt from Hannibal Lecter 101.

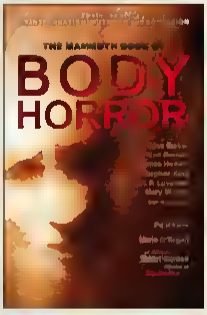
"To me, *Red Dragon* is the defining work of psychological horror and forensic pathology," Skipp opines. "Like *The Exorcist* was to my *Demons* anthology, getting that slice of Thomas Harris' masterpiece was my highest priority."

In *Psychos*' acknowledgments, Skipp notes the psychological toll taken by the months spent submerged in full-tilt crazy. It's a feeling, he confirms, which has lingered.

"This book was gruelling. Not just the stories I bought, but the hundreds of others I read that didn't make the cut. The non-fiction research alone was so depressingly stomach-turning I don't even wanna talk about it. We're one weird, fucked-up species."

"The Transformation" is a gothic yarn about a libertine who makes a body-swapping bargain with a deformed magician, it's immediately followed by "The Tell-Tale Heart," Edgar Allan Poe's still-disturbing 1843 story about a gruesome murder whose perpetrator can't leave dead enough alone.

Since most of us think of body horror in cinematic terms, it makes sense that the editors have included a number of stories that inspired classic horror films. One of the highlights is John W. Campbell's "Who Goes There?" which marked the debut of the shape-shifting alien that menaced scientists in John Carpenter's *The Thing*. The book also includes H.P. Lovecraft's "Herbert West – Reanimator" and George Langelaan's "The Fly," a pair of stories that have inspired at least a half-dozen films between them. Fittingly, *Re-Animator* director Stuart Gordon contributes the book's introduction.



The rest of the volume is a who's who of horror literature. Stephen King, Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Richard Matheson and Robert Bloch are all represented here, along with up-and-comers such as Christopher Fowler and Gemma Files. The theme of body horror is interpreted in a number of ways, from the grisly, graphically depicted murder that obsesses the protagonist of Richard Christian Matheson's "Region of the Flesh" to the tragedy of a vibrant young man's ruined body in Axelle Carolyn's elegiac "Butterfly."

The editors draw from almost two centuries of horror literature, so it's no wonder there isn't a bad story to be found in these pages. Some, such as Neil Gaiman's "Changes," aren't necessarily horror tales, while others – most notably Nancy A. Collins' chilling "Freaktent" – will leave you with a sense of repulsion that's impossible to shake. Great horror, like the stories in this volume, hits us where we live – inside our own fragile flesh.

APRIL SNELLINGS

CITY UNDER THE MOON

Hugh Sterbakov

Ben & Derek Ink

A werewolf apocalypse in New York City? That's exactly what Emmy-nominated screenwriter Hugh Sterbakov (*Robot Chicken: Star Wars*) has dreamt up for his action-packed debut *City Under the Moon*, a crime-thriller which delivers unyielding gore, epic government conspiracies and theoretical monster science in an easy-to-digest and often humorous narrative.

Sterbakov gets to the action within a few short chapters, cleverly developing his characters on the go, while using dialogue-heavy scenes to maintain the brisk pace. What begins as one mysterious and undeniable werewolf attack quickly leads to several more, before the government gets hip to what's going on. But as the victims continue to multiply, they spread the transformative virus through the city like wildfire.

Special agent/trained assassin Brianna Tildascow is brought in to investigate and quickly discovers that a Romanian man, Detenus Valenkov, is behind the string of attacks. An eighteen-year-old horror blogger named Lon (after the great Lon Chaney Jr., natch) is also enlisted by the government after being elected as the world's leading authority on werewolf intelligence, much to his surprise and disbelief. But Lon warms up to the job once he realizes that his new position may allow him to save the world, while becoming rich and famous in the process, and maybe even get laid. Brianna and Lon team up to track Valenkov, with hopes of finding a cure for the virus.



Sterbakov keeps things light but gruesome, maintaining a steady pace with tension-wracked descriptions of werewolf attacks and transformations, and the witty, nerdy ramblings of Lon, which are characterized by his vast knowledge of Roman literature and *Magic: The Gathering* rules. There are plenty of genre-centric jokes that will hit home with science fiction and horror fans, meaning this is definitely not a novel to be taken too seriously, especially considering that the pseudo-scientific explanations behind the virus are pretty ludicrous (the infection actually appears to look like a pentagram). But what *City Under the Moon* lacks in believability, it makes up for in action, offering a visceral, thrilling and ultimately satisfying adventure. Howl for it.

JESSA SOBCZUK

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

BUNKER BOOKS

We had so much fun compiling our Cinema Apocalyptica feature (see p 30), that I couldn't resist doing a mini literary version. So without further ado, a selection of non-zombie (because we've all read *World War Z* by now, right?) end times tales to stoke the fires of your Armageddon imagination.

The Apocalypse Reader (Justin Taylor, ed.)

Featuring classic tales by some of the genre's biggest literary heroes (H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells), as well as entries from more contemporary wordsmiths (Joyce Carol Oates, Neil Gaiman), this anthology not only offers up 34 visions of the end, but because the stories were originally published over the span of many decades, it also serves as an interesting survey of how our end times fiction and themes have evolved over the years.

Birdbox (Michael Louis Calvillo)

Could the Apocalypse be summoned by demonic birds that can merge and mesh with human flesh? *Birdbox* – much like *Sparrow Rock* (see below) – takes familiar horror elements (here avian attacks and possession) and recasts them to form a strikingly original, truly haunting narrative. There are scenes from this story still burned into my brain more than a year after reading.



Earthworm Gods (Brian Keene)

Not necessarily my favourite entry in Keene's oeuvre, but it has the freakiest Apocalypse. First, things get biblical with natural disasters and ever-rising flood waters, then the monsters show up. Giant earthworms and oversized aquatic behemoths become the alpha predators as dry land gets more and more scarce. Zombies have nothing on this. Utterly terrifying.

Sparrow Rock (Nate Kenyon)

This novel made our short list for Fiction Book of the Year in 2010 and concerns a gaggle of high school friends who just happen to be hanging out in a bomb shelter (built by one of their grandfathers) when mushroom clouds erupt all around them. Trapped underground, the teens soon learn there are far worse things to be frightened of than nuclear fallout, namely walking corpses (not the usual kind...) and insects with designs on burrowing deep into their bodies. (See *RM#103* for a full review.)

This Little Light of Mine (Nate Southard)

I don't typically include novellas I've published in my roundups, but *TLLoM* continues to be one of my all-time favourite Apocalypse tales. After a trio of office workers are trapped in a collapsed parking garage following an earthquake, they soon discover that the chaos stretches far beyond their city, and those sounds they keep hearing in the rubble? Well, they aren't rescuers.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: THE MAN BEHIND THE KNIFE

Like with a great recipe, the ingredients of Robert Gleason's iconic poster art for John Carpenter's slasher classic *Halloween* are simple. Add one hand, one large butcher knife (sharpened), one pumpkin (carved) and a heaping spoonful of terror and you've created an image as memorable as the film itself.

The arresting artwork has followed me around for most of my life. I have it framed in my office, looming behind me. Whenever I need to, I'll spin my chair around for a jolt of inspiration, and study the poster closely. My eyes roll over all of the details, taking in every vein, scrutinizing every lump and bump. Then, one day, I saw it: the profile of a face in the hand that clenches the knife! It was as plain as an October day, blank and expressionless. Goosebumps erupted immediately, and now whenever I look upon that glorious imagery, I cannot un-see it. Take a closer ogle, dear readers, and tell me that's not "The Shape." Or am I just high on candy corn?



I've often wondered, just how intentional is this hidden detail? I had to get to the bottom of it, so I reached out to the man who created it, illustrator Richard Gleason.

"I think that the image of the face in the back of the hand is creepy because I was not conscious of trying to create it," the artist says. "It had nothing to do with the script."

Gleason attests that the concept is entirely his and he had no input from Carpenter on the design, only some general guidance from art directors at well-known Hollywood marketing house B.D. Fox and Friends.

"Where the idea came from is hard to say. I think I'm just good at creating strong images that tell a story," he explains. "I looked at the elements of the movie and studied the shapes on the outside of a pumpkin and how they would work with a knife to create a staccato stabbing effect with the correct shadowing. I used my hand as a model. I also purchased a large butcher knife to explore how light reflects off it. Naturally, I had to visually curve the shape of the blade in the illustration to make it work."

It's hard to imagine now, but the artwork was actually rejected at first. Originally, B.D. Fox wanted Gleason to incorporate the Michael Myers mask into the design. After a few days and a good amount of convincing from the artist, the firm had a change of heart. And they obviously must have trusted his judgment, considering he was hired again for the sequels. He's also credited for creating the equally iconic skull-and-pumpkin motif for *Halloween II* and the devilish mask for the Myers-less *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (see p. 44).

While I had him on the line, I also asked Gleason if he could shed a little green light on his poster design for another famous Carpenter film, *The Fog*.

"It was a collaboration with a photographer named Matthew Peak, the artist behind the *Nightmare on Elm Street* posters and son of international film poster illustrator Bob Peak, and myself," he explains. "I illustrated a scary hand reaching out. Again, I used my hand as reference and altered it to have long fingers and fingernails. The poster was similar to *Halloween* – a strong graphic."





Though he's an accomplished illustrator, the Portland, Oregon, native responsible for some of the most atmospheric horror movie key art this side of Heddonfield now spends his time happily painting murals and cityscapes. Will Gleason ever return to the genre or has he been approached recently? He wouldn't say. Yet it's sort of eerily comforting knowing that he's at least still out there... painting.

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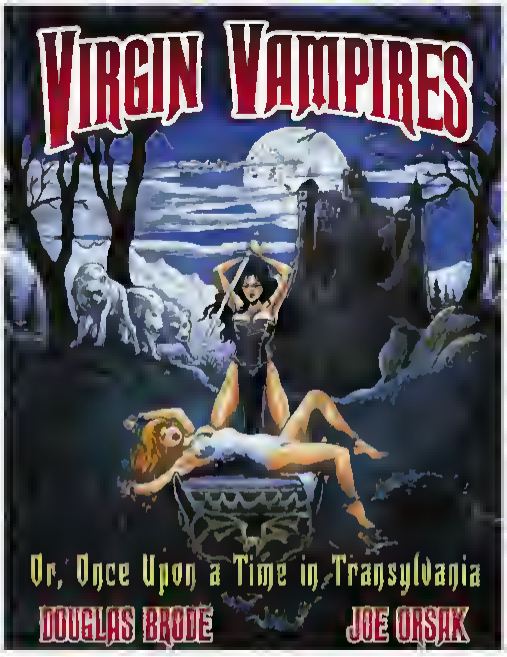
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THE GORE MET

MENU: A RASCALLY RABBIT

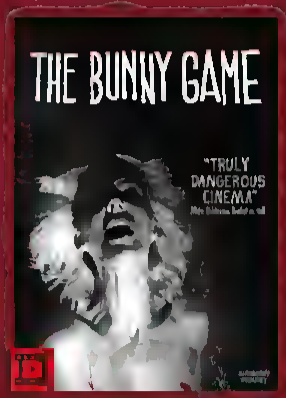


Hog (Jeff Renfro) and [illegible] (Rodleen Getsic)

When Stuart "Feedback" Andrews recently interviewed me for the Rue Morgue Podcast, he asked about the relevance of extreme horror films and the future of the subgenre in a time when one can go online and watch a two-bit porn star murder, dismember and have sex with his victim's corpse. I didn't have an immediate answer until watching Adam Rehmeier's 2010 film *The Bunny Game* (out now on Blu-ray and DVD from Autonomy Pictures).

I should have seen this type of film coming earlier this year, when I wrote about 2009's *House of Flesh Mannequins* (*RM#123*), a horror film that mixes hardcore sex and fetish video footage into a fictional narrative. *The Bunny Game* – which stars Rodleen Getsic as a drug-addled prostitute named Bunny – isn't pornographic, but utilizes reality and sexual situations to an even more disturbing degree.

"Rodleen and I refer to *The Bunny Game* as a living, breathing monster, for which we are simply caretakers," says director Rehmeier. "There was no screenplay, no crew, no rehearsals, no blocking, no multiple takes. Man, woman, camera, microphone. We wanted the violence to be ugly, truthful, hardcore. Rodleen was a victim of a harrowing abduction years prior; the production was a cathartic experience for [her]. She revisited the emotional trauma of her own abduction and artistically pushed past it."



In the film, Bunny hooks up with a long-haul trucker named Hog (Jeff Renfro), an encounter that turns into a nightmare after she is abducted and physically and sexually abused in the back of an empty tractor trailer in the desert over the course of five days. It's brilliantly shot and edited by Rehmeier, and evocative of such films as *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*, *Schramm*, *Frontière(s)*, *Martyrs*, the *Guinea Pig* series and the *August Underground* trilogy.

"I've certainly watched and enjoyed all of the films on that list," says Rehmeier. "But I wouldn't necessarily say they influenced my work. I think my biggest influences as a filmmaker have been Maya Deren, David Lynch and Andrei Tarkovsky. *The Afternoon*, *Eraserhead* and *Stalker* are three of my favourite films. For *The Bunny Game*, I was more influenced by the cast and the energy they were bringing to the table than by films or particular filmmakers."

That energy is apparent in the intense and very realistic performances, particularly in the latter part of the film. Not only is Bunny brutalized by Hog (who uses a branding iron at one point), but so are two other women (played by Drettie Page and Coriander Womack) in flashbacks.

"The violence is real, including the branding," explains Rehmeier. "Rodleen and Drettie had a design in mind during pre-production and worked it out with a coppersmith, who, after crafting it, fixed it to a long screwdriver to look like something crude the trucker would have made himself."

My own interpretation of the film is that it is an attack on sex, which is presented here as a brutish act by men whose sole consideration is their own pleasure. As Rehmeier explains, though, apparently I wasn't taking away the intended message.

"*The Bunny Game* is designed to give the viewer an experience, albeit a horrifying one," he says. "It is a modern cautionary tale, grounded in reality, that doesn't sugar-coat the dangers of prostitution, drug abuse and taking rides with strangers. The film was not designed for entertainment purposes."

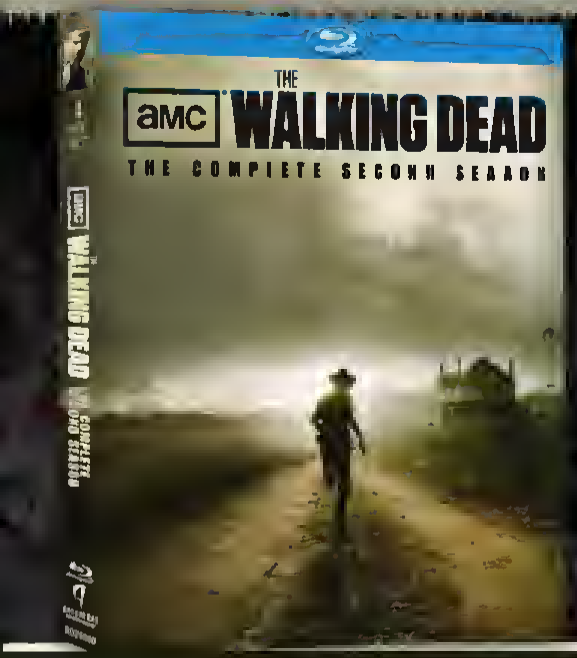
The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) disagreed, banning it for sexual violence before it was to be released in the UK.

Undeterred by the controversy, Rehmeier notes that *The Bunny Game* has won several awards and he estimates that it has been shown more than 25 times in fifteen countries.

"I am busy writing at the moment – several genre films and a few dark comedies," he says. "I am also finishing up post-production work on my second feature film, *Jonas*, which is a squeaky-clean departure from the madness of *The Bunny Game*."

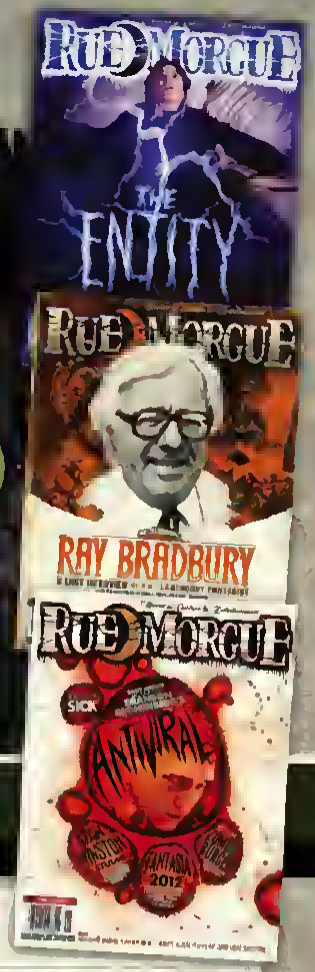
Yup, the future of extreme horror cinema is safe so long as guys like Rehmeier are making fictional films so convincingly brutal that even *they* feel the need to cleanse themselves!

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SALES from the CRYPT

















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BRUTAL

SOUNDTRACK

Alan Howarth

INDEPENDENT

After opening with an overly long, by-the-numbers rocker by brooding bodybuilder Steven Whitaker, Alan Howarth thankfully takes the wheel of the soundtrack to *Brutal*, purportedly a "complex, psychological horror ride" written, co-directed by and starring Michael Patrick Stevens – a filmmaker so green his IMDb page includes a wedding photo. Howarth, a former collaborator of John Carpenter, builds the main theme around haunting strings, a tinkling piano motif not unlike that of *Halloween* and rattlesnake percussion, maintaining an omnipresent mood that he himself describes as "someone is going to die." Without the benefit of seeing the film (which has yet to score a distributor), song titles such as "Sander," "Nail Gun," "Potato Peeler" and "Injection" seem to indicate that *Brutal* features numerous torture sequences, and to that end Howarth has supplied an appropriately seamy backdrop that, though nowhere near the genius of his iconic contributions to Carpenter's oeuvre, will challenge your nerves with well-placed cacophonies of brass, the steady metallic "plink" of the killer at work, and a general atmosphere of danger. **TT**



I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE/ THE ATOMIC CITY

SOUNDTRACK

Leith Stevens

KRITZERLAND

The latest salute to B-movie hysterics is this really unusual double bill featuring the stock music tracks used for *IMaMFOS*, and Leith Stevens' original *The Atomic City* score, which suit one another extremely well because of a musical mandate to stir up Instant Paranoia!™ in audiences. Whereas the former is a mishmash of stock score and jazzy jukebox cues (some by Stevens), the latter represents every typical nuance within the composer's underrated canon (which includes Gerd Pal epics, such as *Destination Moon*). Both the Stevens stock cues and original *Atomic City* tracks feature heavy brass and string content, a potent main theme with a heavy dose of '50s melodrama, gorgeous moments of tenderness, and some great suspense writing, with twirling figures designed to put the listener in the midst of alien or Red menace turmoil. This release is long overdue, and great fun for Stevens fans. **MRH**



LADY IN A CAGE

SOUNDTRACK

Paul Glass

KRITZERLAND

For this entry in the Grand Dame Guignol subgenre, Paul Glass (*Bunny Lake is Missing*) went for a mass of abstract, unhinged sounds performed by an orchestra with slight injections of contemporary jazz. Presented in superb stereo, Glass' score never gels into any concrete theme and doesn't offer any recurring motifs, but there's a rigid continuity of rippling, gliding, fluttering, arching and rattling sounds from strings, woodwinds, harpsichord, bongos and string bass. The half-hour score unfolds like an extended *Twilight Zone* episode, with modernist and concrete noises making up the unstable first third. The shorter middle features a drifting music box source and abstract jazz accompaniment, akin to beat poetry, and the final third is decidedly mordant with the addition of flanng, strained brass and sustained grungy chords. This isn't an easy score to absorb, but Glass' take on psychologically tortured geriatrics is wholly refreshing, and giddily weird. **MRH**



WHEN A STRANGER CALLS

SOUNDTRACK

Dana Kaproff

KRITZERLAND

In spite of skillful direction and affecting performances, the original *When a Stranger Calls* wouldn't be half as chilling without Dana Kaproff's gnashing score. Going against trends of the era, Kaproff sticks with a small string orchestra (and maybe slight electronic sweetening), and immediately establishes the film's unrelenting sense of inevitable malaise by repeating a series of short motifs, namely a dragged-out, grim main theme and a two-note motif for tension that often precedes a major screen shock. Step-like notes appear without any formal intro or ending because the killer isn't sure what he wants beyond payback, leaving it up to Kaproff to tease us with our worst fears for the heroine. Nods to Bernard Herrmann are deliberate, but this vibrato-rich score is one no genre fan should pass up. **MRH**



ZONEN

INSTRUMENTAL

Resan mot psykets brytpunkt

INDEPENDENT

As new generations of horror-heads discover the wild, weird world of 1970s and '80s Italian genre film, so too will a fresh crop of synth practitioners looking to apply their electronic chops to the pseudo-soundtrack game. This Swedish duo is the latest to channel the iconic work of John Carpenter, Italian prog-rock legends Goblin and *The Beyond* composer Fabio Frizzi with its *Resan mot psykets brytpunkt* ("The journey toward psychic reflection"). Aside from the thumping bass lines of "En Ny Tid" ("A New Era") and the post-apocalyptic *2019: After the Fall of New York*-esque synth lines of "Stockholm 2013," Zonen dances up its beats and embraces a dark, horrific sci-fi vibe inspired by the cinematic wasteland of Lucio Fulci and Ridley Scott, while also keeping the exploitation chaos of Swedish director Mats Helge clearly within the beams of its creative headlights. One could certainly play

HYMNS FROM THE HOUSE OF HORROR VOLUME III

THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE

ROCK

Hide and Seek

METROPOLIS



My first Birthday Massacre show was their opening slot for KMFDM in October 2005. I dug the band's sexy goth-punk look and murderously intense onstage energy, but where were the great songs? Time has softened my opinion, plus the Toronto-based synthpop darkwave goth-tinged whatever sextet has sharpened its songwriting fangs over its last few albums. *Pins and Needles* (2009) was intensely catchy, while the near flawlessness of the latest, *Hide and Seek* becomes apparent just a few listens in. Singer Chibi's vocals are especially potent. She's alternately able to sell the vulnerability and fear of lyrics such as "There's something in the dark / and I want to go home" ("Leaving Tonight") or drop Zack de la Rocha-level intensity ("Down"). While many cuts are danceable, *Hide and Seek*'s slowest numbers are its most powerful, with "Alibis" sounding like the soundtrack to a waltz in Hell. Melody and morbidity have rarely sounded this marvellous. **SP**

DOWNLOAD THIS ISSUE'S *HYMN* AT RUE-MORGUE.COM/EXTRAS/HYMNS-FROM-THE-HOUSE-OF-HORROR

THE BIRTHDAY MASSACRE – "NIGHT SHIFT"

the DEVIL'S PLAYLIST

Long before we started compiling this issue's Cinema Apocalyptica feature (p.30), I'd been thinking about how the world might end. No, I don't believe that the Mayan calendar running out this year will signal some extinction-level event. But there are enough dead canaries in the coal mine for me to want to be ready should shit get bad. Thus, with the help of some of Audio Drome's finest contributors, I've assembled some suggestions for the last listening party, uh,.. ever. Sure, there are countless death and doom metal entries to consider, but there's also comfort in hearing some of the classics one final time.

1. METALLICA – "Blackened" (1988)
The opening track from *...And Justice for All* isn't only notable for frontman James Hetfield's masterful combining of words ending in –ation ("Agitation / Violation / Mutilation / Planet dies ..., Termination / Expiration / Cancellation / Human race"), it's also a dread-heavy slab of utter hopelessness.

2. MISFITS – "Earth A.D." (1983)
When Glenn Danzig was crooning for the horror punks, this farewell fuck you declared that the ultimate finish line wouldn't come without a fight and that we might even like living in "bloody hell and sacrifice." Hey, speak for yourself, beefy tits!

3. IRON MAIDEN – "The Number of the Beast" (1982)
With its spoken intro ripped from the Book of Revelation and alleged inspiration coming from a nightmare bassist Steve Harris had after watching *Damien: Omen II*, Iron Maiden's fiery vision of the Devil himself sending "the beast with wrath" to unleash Hell on Earth is the quintessential caution of Old Scratch.

4. SEPULTURA – "Arise" (1991)
The Brazilian thrashers achieved deep impact with *Arise*'s opening one-two death punch, which also includes "Dead Embryonic Cells." After grumbling about cities falling in ruin during an apocalyptic clash, singer Max Cavalera asks, "Why must we die?" Bah, why wrack your brain when you can bang your head?

5. BLUE ÖYSTER CULT – "Don't Fear the Reaper" (1976)
Nothing lightens the mood of a bunker party like one last lick of cowbell.

6. SLAYER – "South of Heaven" (1988)
Half of Slayer's discography could probably qualify here, but when Tom Araya bellows on this stately swath of evil that the second coming will be unleashed with no warning, he leaves no doubt as to where your rotten soul is headed. "Before you see the light, you must die."

7. KILLING JOKE – "Asteroid" (2003)
A man who literally fled to Iceland in the '80s in a wake of Apocalypse paranoia, singer Jaz Coleman has sounded the death knell on humanity for years now. On this explosive rocker, he predicts civilizations will be vapourized when nature is "renewed by fire made whole."

8. MINISTRY – "Grace" (1992)
With this bristling noisescape of static, gunfire and screams, human pincushion Al Jourgensen didn't give us much to sing along to, given the lyrics are limited to a repeated mantra of "Doomsday, the final battle. Doomsday, armageddon," but if you're looking for an authentic soundtrack to Judgment Day, this is it.

9. NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS – "Death is Not the End" (1996)
"When the cities are on fire with the burning flesh of men," just remember that this mass murder ballad promises sweet salvation in the afterlife. So you may want to think twice before making any embarrassing confessions on your deathbed.

10. BLACK SABBATH – "Electric Funeral" (1970)
People rendered clay, rivers turning to wood, eyes melting into blood – this desolate nuclear fallout nightmare certainly won't induce smiles in whoever survives, but modern musical pessimism literally began with these original doomsayers, so it's only fitting that they perform last rites.

Good music for bad endings... so mote it be.

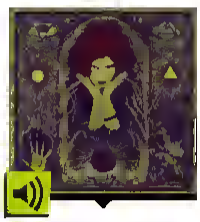
TREVOR TUMINSKI

spot-the-influence for the album's roughly 30 minutes but it's clear that Zonen has combined the sounds of its idols in creating this unique roller-coaster ride of dread. **GP** ★★★★½



THE PANIC BEATS
PUNK
Without Warning
P Trash Records

That rudimentary three-chord punk rock singalong sound created by the Ramones is bedrock. Oft-imitated and sometimes replicated (The Queers even re-recorded the entire *Rocket to Russia* album), it's commonplace for groups to find a novelty approach to riding those black leather coattails. (For example, Norwegian side project The Hanson Brothers mixes the Ramones aesthetic with hockey.) The Panic Beats ply their three chords in tribute to the sleazier side of horror, specifically retro-slasher movies, Fulci gorefests and giallo brutality. Short, rough and anthemic, caustic cuts such as "New York Ripper," "The Mutilator" and "Dead Meat" are aimed right at the horror cortex. Too bad all the songs pretty much sound the same, and *way* too bad any residual Ramones-y fun is ripped away by an album cover vying for the Misogyny Hall of Fame. Gabba gabba haaame. **DA** ★½



JESS AND THE ANCIENT ONES
ROCK
S/T
Svart Records

Stop me if you've heard this one: epic classic guitar rock drenched in occult themes and anchored by a full-throated vixen who clearly listened to a lot of Heart, Jefferson Airplane and Coven growing up. Finland's Jess and the Ancient Ones is just the latest in a line of recent witch-rock revivalists, including The Devil's Blood (*RM#101*) and Blood Ceremony (*RM#85*). That's not to say that the most potent of their songs – "Prayer for Death and Fire," "Ghost Riders" and "The Devil (in G-minor)" – won't have you falling completely under Jess' spell. Listeners unaware of the other aforementioned practitioners may be taken with the band's undeniably dark, intoxicating allure. But those who've danced around similar fires for a few seasons now may find themselves immune to these seven otherwise accomplished necromantic numbers. Your first cult is always the deepest. **TT** ★★



CHRYSALIDE
INDUSTRIAL
Don't Be Scared, It's About Life
Artoffact Records

Criminally overlooked upon its initial indie release in 2011, this second full-length from French industrialists Chrysalide is a startlingly jagged shard of futuristic digital noise that you can sometimes dance to. Fitting then that, only a year later, it gets this deluxe reissue – including a twelve-page booklet, five bonus tracks (there's a cover of Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall" that sounds like the original being played by a self-aware computer that's on fire) and new cover art. And forget the album title: there's plenty to be terrified by here. This skilled set of syncopated rage is astonishingly visceral and ready to opt out of any rescue attempts for our decaying planet. At 22 tracks, it's not an easy listen, but fans of harsh industrial will cry joyless tears of blood over the merciless steamroll of "Traders Must Die," the piano flourishes of "I Do Not Divert Eyes," the Skinny Puppy-esque stomp of "Not My World" and the deliciously pessimistic "We Are Food for Worms." Fuck the world, save yourself. **TT** ★★★★½



DETHKLDK
METAL
Dethalbum III
Williams Street Records

The cartoon meatheads of *Metalocalypse* are back with a third album of caustic chicanery – or are they? After the, uh, blistering opener "I Ejaculate Fire," De-

thklok co-creator Brendon Small (vocals, guitar, bass, keys) – along with studio musicians Gene Hoglan (drums) and Bryan Beller (bass) – ill-advisedly shifts the jokes to the back-burner in favour of raising a din not unlike so many of the bands they've historically parodied. Maybe a lyric sheet would be of some help, as Small's growl has become almost unintelligible – likely a by-product of the rigors of the band's real touring (see *RM#124*). Songs such as "Ghostqueen' and "Kilkstardo Abominate" might be worthy successors to Dethklok faves "Murmaider," "Bloodrocuted" or "Hatredcopter,' but without the benefit of discernible lyrics, it's tough to know. The musicianship is as solid as ever but when it comes to Nathan Explosion and co., Small seems to have forgotten that we come for the gags and stay for the metal, not the other way around. **TT** 2.5



DOPETHRONE

METAL

III

INDEPENDENT

Can't get enough of that Electric Wizard fuzz and those New Orleans-brewed swampy tones (Eyehategod, Down, etc.)? Craving a blackened doom/death/sludge act from Down Below? Just like blues pioneer Robert Johnson, Dopethrone must've made a deal with the Devil to attain the supremely evil sound of its unintentionally titled third album (available for a mere $6.66 on its bandcamp.com page). The Montreal trio wallows in smoke, demons, death, the occult and enough psychotropic drugs to send both Hunter S. Thompson and William Burroughs on one hell of a trip on these five songs, entrenching 37 heavy minutes with exploitation film samples, malevolent growls and gritty, slow-burning blues-infused metal grooves. There ain't no such thing as too much headbanging with fast, addictive joints such as "The Devil's Dandruff' and the mighty "Reverb Deep.' Bow before Dopethrone's altar and be forever doomed. **KG** 4.5



AUROCH

METAL

From Forgotten Worlds

HELLTHRASHER PRODUCTIONS

In H.P. Lovecraft's day, 'heavy metal" was the bounty the frog-men of Innsmouth paid for a human sacrifice, not a genre of music, but that hasn't stopped purveyors of distortion from adapting the author's mythos to the old gurgle 'n' grind. Black Sabbath, Metallica, Celtic Frost and Morbid Angel have all composed homages to Dld Ones and the same Michael Whelan illustration graces the covers of both Obituary's *Cause of Death* and the Lovecraft collection *Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre*. On *From Forgotten Worlds*, Vancouver's self-described "Lovecraftian death metal" outfit Auroch raises the stakes, issuing squalls of frenetic tech-death and Cthulhu-channelling vocals as heavy as the spires of Miskatonic University. It is, however, in lyrics replete with promises to "Ibate Luna unto vicious Azathoth," nods to 'Yithian genesis" and the "minions of Hah," and several variations on the adjective "cephalopodic" that these disciples' fealty to an aural Necronomicon truly shines through. **SM** 3.5



NILE

METAL

At the Gates of Sethu

NUCLEAR BLAST

The Egyptology-inspired brutality of Nile's 1998 debut, *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka*, vaulted the band into the death metal elite and it has remained there through five highly regarded albums, including bona fide classics *In Their Darkened Shrines* (2002) and *Annihilation of the Wicked* (2005). For its seventh release, Nile has tweaked its sound a bit, to inevitable fan consternation. They've toned down the massive production for a more immediate live feel, written songs with more conventional grooves and melodic elements, and used some guest vocalists to voice characters in certain cuts. The shouty vocals and thinner mix take some getting used to, but the guitar heroics and blast beats are still there. Standout tracks include the deadly low-end groove of "When My Wrath Is Done," the head-swinging "The Gods Who Light Up the Sky at the Gate of Sethu" and the crushing doom of 'Tribunal of the Dead." **GM** 3.5



DUBLIN DEATH PATROL

METAL

Death Sentence

MASCOT RECORDS

This side project forged by some of Dublin, California's finest thrash musicians – most notably Testament singer Chuck Billy and former Exodus vocalist Steve Souza – returns for a, well, not necessarily lean (there's seven band members playing on this follow-up to 2007's *DDP 4 Life*), but definitely mean, second round of sun-bleached death dirges. Billy reportedly entrusted Souza with writing most of the lyrics while Testament finished its recently released tenth album, which must account for the remarkable cohesion of the interplay between the two singers' distinct voices. As Billy lays down a foundation of gut-scraping growls, Souza's antagonistic goblin sneer occupies the high range, giving fork-tongued drills such as "Mind Sewn Shut,' "Dehumanize," "Blood Sirens" and "Welcome to Hell" a much more bloodthirsty edge than either singer's usual gigs. Not every track works: the last two cuts, "Macabre Candor" and "Butcher Baby," feel tacked on to round out the album, but fans of the Bay Area thrash scene will wanna lap this up. **TT** 3.5



VIDEODROME

AUTOPSY

METAL

Born Undead

PEACEVILLE



Autopsy was a seminal death metal band that helped define the style but broke up just as extreme metal was exploding in the early '90s. Reforming after recording a pair of tracks for a 2009 reissue of its 1989 debut, *Severed Survival*, the band returned to the stage at the Maryland Deathfest in 2010 – a performance captured on this excellent DVD. Included is a two-hour documentary in which the history of the band is torn from the mouth of the beast via extensive interviews with members Chris Reifert, Eric Cutler and Danny Coralles. The "Concerts" section contains rehearsal footage and the set from Deathfest, as well as selections from other shows that year, and 'Entrails" features four music videos. Five hours of material are packed onto one disc, housed in a hardcover digipak with righteously gory cover art by Kent Mathieu. This is an essential addition to any death metal collection. **GM** 5



THESE MONSTER RECORDS OF YESTERYEAR WILL SEND YOU SPINNING

THE CREATURE TALKS!

JAMES BURRELL

BACK IN THE 1960s AND '70s, BOYS AND GHOULS WITH MONSTERS ON THE BRAIN HAD MYRIAD WAYS TO SATISFY THEIR CREEPY CRAVINGS.

Weekend movie matinees, magazines, plastic model kits, comic books and even breakfast cereals provided a means to indulge kids' horror habits. One of the most popular activities, though, was to gather around the record player and put on a horror-themed spoken-word album.

These aural excursions into terror and the supernatural were evocative of radio programs of the 1930s, '40s and '50s, such as *Lights Out*, *Inner Sanctum* and *Suspense*. Featuring dialogue (performed, at times by well-known horror stars, including Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee and Vincent Price), music and spooky sound effects mimicking thunder, pelting rain, howling wolves, flapping bat wings, creaking doors, ominous footsteps and blood-curdling screams, the albums encouraged a "theatre of the mind" for youngsters increasingly weaned on movies and TV shows.

Here's a look at a few vintage vinyl that'll have you digging through the cellar for your dad's old turntable.

DROP DEAD! AN EXERCISE IN HORROR (1962)

CAPITOL

While some spooky vinyl releases were simply decades-old radio broadcasts, others were brand-new "high fidelity" recordings engineered in "stereophonic sound." One of the earliest was this collection of creepy short stories penned by *Lights Out* scriptwriter Arch Oboler. Partially comprised of tales from *Lights Out*, standout yarns include "I'm Hungry" (which gives grisly new meaning to the term "brain food") and the infamous "Chicken Heart," a bizarre tale of a science-experiment-gone-wrong involving a fowl's ticker that threatens to destroy the world.

TALES OF THE FRIGHTENED VOLUMES 1 AND 2 (1963)

MERCURY

Read by Boris Karloff, the stories in these two atmospheric efforts – featuring such titles as "Call at Midnight," "Just Inside the Cemetery," "Never Kick a Black Cat" and "Voice From the Grave" – were penned by prolific writer Michael Avallone and originally intended for a late-1950s radio series that never got off the ground. Early electronic music and weird sound effects coupled with Karloff's sinister yet strangely mellifluous tones make these wonderfully macabre albums a real treat.



FAMOUS MOHSTERS SPEAK (1963)
WONDERLAND/A A

A favourite with creature-loving kiddies everywhere, this album was advertised within the back pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (no surprise, as the magazine had a hand in its production). In 'Frankenstein's Monster Talks!" a gathering of scientists have assembled to hear rare audio recordings of Dr Frankenstein's creation "speaking" through a device that enables its thoughts to be heard, while "Dracula's Return!" has the Transylvanian Count documenting his life via a reporter who has the untortunate luck of stumbling across the vampire's lair in the bowels of the British Museum. Actor Gabriel Dell does a commendable job with the voices (his Bela Lugosi imitation is tops) and the scripts by Cherney Berg are surprisingly sombre. Dracula comes across as exceptionally calculating and evil, and Frankenstein's monster is a great deal less sympathetic than in the movies, as he murders those around him with little hesitation. Gorgeous record jacket artwork depicting various Universal beasties (including, puzzlingly, the Wolf Man Creature from the Black Lagoon and the Mummy) helps make this one of the best horror LPs of the era.

ORACULA (1966)
STAMFORD

The first of two Dracula albums to be recorded by genre icon Christopher Lee, this two-record set (adapted by *Creepy* magazine creator Russ Jones) was more faithful to the original Bram Stoker novel than any of the Hammer versions in which Lee appeared. Demonstrating a flair for accents, Lee laudably voices all of the roles himself and the result is an excellent tribute to the classic vampire yarn. Available at the time by mail-order from *Monster Mania* magazine (also edited by Jones), the album cover featured artwork from Hammer's then-latest Drac flick, *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*.

TALES OF WITCHES, GHOSTS AND GOBLINS (1972)
CAEDMON RECORDS

Performed by the Merchant of Menace, Vincent Price, this was an eclectic mix of short tales involving spectres, witchcraft and deviltry, which also included instructions on how to perform such acts as raising the dead or turning oneself into a werewolf. Price's elegant delivery makes this a joy for listeners; he would go on to record several additional albums under the Caedmon label, including *A Graveyard of Ghost Tales* (1973) and *A Hornbook for Witches* (1976), plus a reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" (1977).

SCARY SPOOKY STORIES (1973)
TROLL RECORDS

Aimed at younger listeners, this eerie offering is comprised of such atmospheric gems as "Dark, Dark, Dark," "The Thing at the Foot of the Bed," "Wait 'til Martin Comes" and the absolutely creeptastic "The Dare," in which a young boy named Jim accepts a dare by his friends to make a midnight trek to the grave of a recently deceased, curmudgeonly old coot – but soon regrets taking the challenge.

THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF; DRACULA - TERROR IN THE SHOW; MAH-THING - NIGHT OF THE LAUGHING DEAD!; THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN (1974)
POWER RECORDS

Well-known for their *Star Trek*, *Planet of the Apes* and Marvel and DC superhero releases (each one accompanied by an illustrated comic book), Power Records achieved an additional fan base with its monster series adapted from the Marvel Comics' horror lines *Werewolf By Night*, *The Tomb of Dracula*, *The Man-Thing* and *The Monster of Frankenstein*. Effective, lurid little chillers that were perfect to listen to before heading to bed, they were also – at least according to the creators of the series – effective learning aids, with covers proclaiming, "It's fun to read as you hear!" The records would subsequently be re-released minus the comics.



HAMMER PRESENTS DRACULA (1974)
CAPITOL/EMI

In the early to mid-1970s, in an effort to branch out beyond filmmaking, Hammer Studios extended its brand to albums and magazines. With this offering, Christopher Lee once again takes the reins for an all-new tale of a young couple forced to spend the night at the castle of the bloodthirsty Count after their coach breaks down. Featuring the Dracula story on Side A, Side B contained music from four other Hammer productions: *The Vampire Lovers*, *Fear in the Night*, *She* and *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde*. Featuring cover art from *Dracula A.D. 1972*, showing Lee putting the bite on Caroline Munro, it's a much sought-after collectible for Hammerphiles.

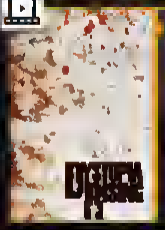
THE LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES (1974)
WARNER BROS

Hammer's second, and final, spoken-word project features the immaculate annunciation of British thespian Peter Cushing in an audio retelling of the studio's kung fu vampire epic. Featuring sound effects and a rousing score by prolific Hammer composer James Bernard, the album also contains musical cues not in the film, including an impressive Chinese-styled march that opens and closes the LP. Interestingly, a Hammer *Frankenstein* album was also proposed for production but never saw life.

IF YOU CAN'T GET ENOUGH VINTAGE SPOKEN-WORD HORROR, TRY THESE TITLES TOO: Basil Rathbone Reads Edgar Allan Poe, Volume One *(Caedmon, 1954)*, Sleep No More! – Famous Ghost and Horror Stories Read by Nelson Olmstead *(Vanguard, 1956)*, Roddy McDowall Reads the Horror Stories of H.P. Lovecraft *(Lively Arts/Prestige Records, 1962)*, An Evening with Boris Karloff and His Friends *(Decca, 1967)*, Sounds of Terror! *(Pickwick, 1974)* and A Story of Dracula, the Wolfman and Frankenstein *(Power Records, 1975)*.

PLAY DEAD

NOW PLAYING> DYSTOPIA RISING, SKYRIM: DAWNGUARD DLC, EERIE ESTATE AGENT



DYSTOPIA RISING: A ZOMBIE LARP

Live Action Role Play

Dystopia Rising

It's dark out. The group I'm with has stopped behind a barricaded cabin so we can try to get our bearings. Several people are hurt, one critically. I only have three bullets left and even though I'm a pretty good shot, it's not enough to stop the pack of drooling undead headed our way. Two of my compatriots, a beautiful Russian girl named Oxana and a half-naked guy who's clutching a spear, approach, and without exchanging a word, I know that they're prepared to join me in what may be a fateful last stand.

In reality, the bullets are foam, the spear is rubber and the beauty is a Toronto funeral director who's accompanied me and some other nerdy Canucks on an eight-hour drive to Sparta, New Jersey, to take part in a zombie LARP (Live Action Role Play game) called Dystopia Rising.

Based on the tabletop game created by Eschaton Media, Dystopia Rising is set in a post-apocalyptic world. Though the records are a bit hazy, it seems that, sometime in the 1980s, there was a zombie infestation that spread out of control so quickly that the UN decided to nuke the largest cities in an effort to contain it. It didn't work.

Flash forward approximately 100 years and humanity's remnants struggle to survive. On a 240-acre campground devoid of technology, players desperately seek food and shelter while being chased by zombies and slavers looking to put the bite on the slowest of the herd.

"I had been running LARPs for over a decade and found myself getting frustrated with the rules and game worlds that were provided," explains founder Michael Pucci. "I wanted a game world that was fast paced, gritty, and where you could put the costume on at the start of the weekend, jump into the character and, when you were done playing, you could close up the box and be done with it until the next game. Also, I enjoy scaring the shit out of people."

After downloading the free online rulebook, players create a character from an assortment of strains of humanity. Among them, a clan of underground dwellers known as Lascanans – scavengers that evolved from generations trapped in bomb shelters and subterranean military bases – and the Red Stars, a tightly knit band of throwback Communists who share food and weapons while maintaining fierce nationalistic pride.



Players must also select one of a variety of vocations, including assassin, mad scientist, martial artist, sniper, spy, and tinker (an industrious type who can fix the broken machinery and useless technology that litters the landscape). Each profession comes with its own specific skill set, strengths and weaknesses, weapons abilities, and – if you're lucky – psionic powers or magical skills.

"This is a very *Mad Max*-inspired zombie apocalypse," explains Pucci. "That means if you come to the game with just your modern clothes, you will stick out a bit. Also, when you are at a game, take chances and meet new people. Everyone at a game, no matter how cool or intimidating they may be in real life, is a giant gamer geek. No one is going to judge you for your hobby, so go out there and take some risks! The worst thing that happens is that your character dies, you have some great stories, and the next character you make will be even cooler than the first."

During gameplay, all participants must devote a set number of hours to zombie duty, where you drop your in-game persona and become one of the rotting fiends that's sent to attack the encampment – a time to be the hunter rather than the hunted.

Currently, there are only a handful of Dystopia Rising sites operating in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Texas, but, just as with the undead, it's only a matter of time before more pop up.

"With all of the networked games together, we have over 1000 players, not counting people who only play the tabletop [version]," says Pucci. "It doesn't matter what your age, sex, gender, race or sexual preference is, within the DR community, we are all about just being yourself. Also, chasing people through the woods with a chainsaw while wearing a loincloth is pretty boss, too!"

With an entry fee of $45 per weekend, Dystopia Rising is a fun, cheap and thrilling camping experience that'll give you a taste of what the world will be like when the zombie apocalypse finally comes.

ANDREW LEE



SKYRIM: DAWNGUARD DLC

PC, Xbox 360
Bethesda Softworks

While *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* and *Dark Souls* may have been *RM*'s top picks for video games in 2011, if the qualifier "horror" was removed from the voting, then Bethesda's *Skyrim* (the fifth installment in the *Elder Scrolls* series) would have taken the honour hands down.

A super-immersive, absolutely massive, fantasy RPG that takes more than 200 hours to complete, *Skyrim* is graphically striking, from its gorgeous painterly vistas to its snow-squall-riddled mountain peaks, and it's more than a little addictive. With ten playable races, two warring factions and hundreds of main and side quests, even the game's replay factor is completely off the charts. But the base title isn't particularly macabre. Sure, players battle sorcerers, trolls, vampires, skeletons and zombie-like creatures, but the emphasis is on dragons and your role, as the prophesied Dragonborn, in slaying them. And while you could always get infected and quest as a werewolf or vampire, until *Dawnguard*, these paths were not truly fleshed-out.

The bulk of the new content is focused on the vampires and the Dawnguard (vampire hunters), but werewolves also finally get their own skill tree. The DLC adds more than twenty quests, as well as new weapons (most notably crossbows), extra, tougher monsters, the ability to fight while on horseback and additional characters, locations and items. But what's it like being a vampire in *Skyrim*? Kind of difficult at first. Your Vampire Lord form grants four base attacks, two melee and two magic, but it's fairly tough going until you get some vampiric kills under your belt and can add more skills to your roster (including Night Cloak, which surrounds you with bats that feed on nearby attackers, and Summon Gargoyle, which conjures up a supernatural minion to fight at your side). Of course, being undead means you have to feed on blood regularly and you're weaker during the day (when your health and stamina don't automatically recharge) – elements that add a heightened emphasis to the in-game clock.

Like *Skyrim* itself, *Dawnguard*'s biggest shortcoming is its myriad, occasionally staggering glitches and bugs, but they don't even come close to ruining the experience. If you're like me and have been dying for a great vampire game, this comes pretty close, but be warned: it may eat your life. *Skyrim* and *Dawnguard* aren't just casual distractions; they are an odyssey you embark upon – so be sure to pack a bag and say farewell to your loved ones before playing them.

HEADSHOTS: PLENTY OF ADDITIONAL QUESTS, BAD-ASS VAMPIRE/WEREWOLF SKILL TREES
MISFIRES: WAY TOO MANY GLITCHES

MONICA S. KUEBLER



EERIE ESTATE AGENT

iPhone, iPad, iTouch, Android
Choice of Games

If you were a child of the 1980s, you may have fond memories of those spooky *Choose Your Own Adventure* books that were immensely popular during that decade. If you happen to be one of those nostalgic types, you'll probably want to check out *Eerie Estate Agent*, which ports the concept to the digital format and adds a gaming element to it.

You play as a real estate agent saddled with a grouchy bitch of a boss and an ultimatum: out-earn your colleague over the next six months or lose your job. Oh yeah, the property you've been assigned is haunted. This all unfolds through the text-based story, which is wonderfully descriptive, surprisingly well-written and at times quite creepy. The choices you make about your background, your approach to renting the property and your handling of the tenants – should you get some – propel the narrative along and also contribute to your overall score, which is broken down into several categories, measuring your boss' happiness with you, your ruthlessness, overall money raised and a couple other factors.

With many decisions to make and many different paths to follow, *Eerie Estate Agent* has roughly the same enjoyment value as those classic *CYOA* books, but don't mistake this for child's play. Being an estate agent means making tough decisions, and ruthlessness is scored for a reason. Now, why are you still sitting here? You have a property to rent. Chop chop!

HEADSHOTS: LENGTHY ENGAGING STORY, COOL PERSONALIZATION FEATURES
MISFIRES: MORE ARTWORK WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE

MONICA S. KUEBLER

CLASSIC CUT

RONDO HATTON

1894 - 1946 ☠ USA

Though not officially a part of Universal's monster lineup, actor Rondo Hatton was one of the most notable presences in the studio's illustrious horror output as it dwindled down in the 1940s. With thick, enlarged facial features (the result of a rare condition known as acromegaly, in which the body continues to pump out growth hormones past puberty), Hatton's face gradually became more disfigured and distorted throughout the years until his untimely death in 1946, at the very peak of his stardom. While often held up as an example of Hollywood's unfortunate willingness to exploit actors with physical anomalies, Universal's eventual evolution of Hatton's roles shows that he was an increasingly respected performer who could have been one of the silver screen's best-loved horror icons.



Hatton actually made his horror debut in an uncredited role in Universal's 1939 adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, but didn't return to the studio's genre roster until five years later for the Sherlock Holmes series entry *The Pearl of Death* (1944), with Basil Rathbone. Playing The Creeper, a thuggish killer, he carries out the dirty work for his boss, a master criminal trying to recover a stolen pearl. This monstrous murderer, with a penchant for breaking his victims' backs, may have been a small part but it made a big impression, and lives on today as Hatton's signature role.

Using film lighting that emphasized Hatton's abnormal physiognomy, Universal must have recognized his potential as a new kind of screen terror, one that wouldn't require an expensive makeup artist or costume designer to drive up its already dwindling budgets. With many of its biggest horror icons now working elsewhere, Universal presented Hatton with a long-term contract, even though his disease made it difficult for him to deliver any dialogue.

Hatton next appeared in *The Jungle Captive* (1945) as Moloch, the Igor-like sidekick of a mad doctor. One of several roles in which he was relegated to mostly being a menacing background presence, Hatton nevertheless gets a chance to play hero when Moloch turns on his master after growing angry with his cruel experiments on an ape woman.

An ostensible sequel to the Sherlock Holmes installment *The Spider Woman* (1944), Hatton's next film, *The Spider Woman Strikes Back* (1946), cast the actor as the deaf-mute servant of the star of the original, Gale Sondergaard, in an entirely different role as an old woman feeding her collection of carnivorous plants with the blood of boarders.

Hatton more or less reprised his portrayal of the back-breaking Creeper twice more. In *House of Horrors* (1946), probably the most accomplished of his films, he again carries out murders, at the behest of a sculptor who wants revenge on the art critics who've given his work bad reviews. The Creeper's official comeback was in *The Brute Man*, the only film in which Hatton landed a lead role and perhaps the movie for which he is best known. Released not long after his death, and seemingly loosely based on his own life, it stars Hatton as a handsome athlete who, after being deformed by a college science lab accident, returns to get his revenge on those that caused it. A major evolution from his past films, *The Brute Man* not only repositioned The Creeper as a sympathetic character struggling to cope with the reactions of those repulsed by his appearance, but also as a leading man with a love interest – a blind piano teacher played by Jane Adams. With the most dialogue he was ever given and actual character development, it was clear that Universal was finding new ways to use Hatton, and that this likely would have been just the start of his starring roles, had it not been for his death.

He may have only appeared in these five Universal horror films, but Hatton's fan base has continued to grow over the years, exemplified most recently by the Classic Horror Film Board's online awards being christened the Rondos, which have lauded the year's best horror properties for the past decade. It's easy to see why – while Universal monster characters such as The Mummy, Frankenstein and The Wolf Man were tragic figures on screen, Hatton's life was likely just as heartbreaking as any role he took on. Though lesser known than those heavily merchandised monsters, the fact that he's still an important character in the history of Universal's horror output should make The Creeper an honorary member of its classic creature club.

PAUL CORUPE

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